THE JUDGMENT BOOKS

BY

E. F. BENSON











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THE JUDGMENT BOOKS



"HE CUT AND STABBED THE FIGURE IN FIFTY PLACES" [Page 176

THE JUDGMENT BOOKS

A Story

BY

E. F. BENSON
AUTHOR OF "DODO"

ILLUSTRATED



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THE JUDGMENT BOOKS

CHAPTER I

The terrace to the south of Penalva Forest lay basking in the sunshine of an early September afternoon, and the very bees which kept passing in and out from the two hives beneath the laurel shrubbery to the right seemed going about their work with most unproverbial drowsiness. A flight of some eight steps led down from the centre of the terrace to the lawn below, where a tennis-court was marked out, and by the bottom of the steps ran a gravel-path which sloped up past the beehives

to join the terrace at the far end. In the gutter by this path lay a tennis-ball, neglected and desolate. Below the lawn the ground sloped quickly away in a stretch of stubbly hay-field, just shorn of its aftermath, down to a fence, which lay straggling along a line of brown seaweed-covered rocks, over which the waveless water of the estuary of the Fal crept up silently at high tide.

A little iron staircase, the lower steps of which, and the clasp which fastened it to the wall, were fringed with oozy, amphibious growth, communicated with the beach on one side and the field on the other. Except for this clearing to the south of the house, the woods climbed up steeply from almost the water's edge to the back of a broad Cornish moor, all purple and gold with gorse and heather, and resonant with

bees. Irresponsible drowsiness seemed the key-note of the scene.

At a corner of the lawn, lying full length on a wicker sofa beneath the shade of the trees, lay Jack Armitage, also irresponsibly drowsy. He would have said he was meditating. Being an artist, he conceded to himself the right to meditate as often and as long as he pleased, but just now his meditations were entirely confined to vague thoughts that it was tea-time; and that, on the whole, he would not have another pipe; so he thrust his hands into his coat-pockets and only thought about tea. Perhaps the familiar and still warm bowl of his favorite brierwood was responsible for his change of intention; in any case, it is certain that he drew it out and began to fill it with the careful precision of those who know that the good gift of tobacco is squandered

if it is bestowed aimlessly or carelessly into its censer.

He had been staying with Frank Trevor, the owner of this delightful place, for nearly a month, and he had sketched and talked art, in which he disagreed with his host on every question admitting two opinions—and these are legion—all day and a considerable part of the night. Frank, who was even more orthodox than himself on the subject of meditation, had finished, some two months before, the portrait at which he had been working; and, as his habit was, had worked much too hard while he was at it, had knocked himself up, and for the last eight weeks had spent his time in sitting in the sun serene and idle. Jack was leaving next day, and had passed the morning in the woods finishing a charming sketch of the estuary seen through a foreground

of trees. At lunch Frank had said he was going to sit in the garden till tea-time, after which they were going on the river; but he had not appeared, and Jack for the last hour or two had been intermittently wondering what he was doing.

At this moment Frank was sitting in a low chair in his studio doing nothing. But he had been having a rather emotional afternoon all by himself, seeing little private ghosts of his own, and he looked excited and troubled. In his idle intervals he always kept the door of his studio locked, and neither went in himself nor allowed any one else to. But this afternoon he had wanted a book which he thought might be there, and before he found it he had found something else which had raised all the ghosts of his Decameron, and had indirectly made him resolve to begin work again at once.

In his search he had taken down from the shelves a book he had not touched for some years, and out of its pages there slipped a torn yellow programme of a concert at one of the Café Chantants in Paris. It went on bowing and fluttering in its fall; and as he picked it up and looked at it for a moment idly the ghosts began to rise. There was one ghost in particular which, like Moses' rod, soon swallowed up all the other ghosts. She had been to that concert with him — she had been to other concerts with him; and in another moment he had crumpled up the momentous little yellow programme and flung it into the grate.

He walked up and down the room for a minute or two, for the ghost was still visible, and then, by a very natural effect of reaction, he picked up the pro-

gramme again, smoothed it out, and put it back on the table.

What a hot, stifling night it had been! Paris lay gasping and choking as in a vapor-bath. They had soon left the concert, and walked about in the garden. Even the moonlight seemed hot, and every now and then a little peevish wind ruffled the tree-tops, and then grabbed at the earth below, raising a cloud of stinging dust — a horrible night!

He had left Paris next day for a holiday, and had spent a month at New Quay, on the north coast of Cornwall. How restful and delicious it was! It seemed the solution of all difficulties to pass quiet, uneventful days in that little backwater of life, away from towns and jostling crowds; above all, away from Paris—beautiful, terrible Paris! He lived a good deal with the artist set

there, charming and intelligent folk, who prattled innocently of sunsets and foregrounds, and led a simple, healthy life. He had fallen in love with simple, healthy lives; he began to hate the thought of the streets and the gas and the glitter of Paris. He spent long days on the shore listening to the low murmur of the sound-quenched waves, and long nights with the fisher-folks on the sea, catching mackerel. In those long, still hours he could think that the sea was like some living thing, breathing slowly and steadily in sleep, and he a child leaning on her breast, safe in her care, alone with the great tender mother of mankind.

One morning—how well he remembered it!—after a night on the sea, he had landed a mile or so from the village, and had walked along the shore alone as the dawn was breaking, and, coming

round a little jutting promontory of rock, he had found two or three fishermen who had just pulled their net to land, naked but for a cloth round the waist, gathered round a little fire they had made on the beach, where they had broiled a few of their haul; and as he paused and spoke to them, for they were old friends, one offered him a piece of broiled fish, and another, who had not been out, but had helped them to bring in the net, had brought down some bread and honey-comb, and he ate the fish and honey-comb on the shore of the sea as day broke . . .

And it was on that same morning he first met Margery his wife. She had come with some friends of his from London by the night train, and they were all going down to the bathing-machine, after their night's journey, when Frank arrived at the village. He had

known at once that the world only held one woman for him.

Their days of courtship were few. Within three weeks of the time they had met Frank had proposed to her and been accepted. One afternoon, with the fine, bold honesty of love, he had told her that he had led such a life as other men lead, that his record was not stainless, and that she ought to know before she bound up her life with him. But Margery had stopped him. She had said she did not wish to know; that she loved him, and was not that enough? But Frank still felt that she had better know; if ghosts were to rise between them it was less startling if she knew what ghosts to expect. But she had started as if in pain, and said:

"Ah, don't, Frank; you hurt me when you talk like that. It is dead and

past. Ah, I knew that. Well, then, bury it—let us bury it together."

And he obeyed her, and buried it.

He thought over all this as he sat with the crumpled programme in his hand. Was it ever possible to bury a thing entirely? Had not everything which we thought dead a terrible faculty of raising itself at most unexpected moments? A scrap of paper—a few words in a printed book—these could be the last trump for a buried sin, and it would rise.

He got up off the sofa—these were ugly thoughts—and went on looking for the book he had come to find. Ah, there it was in its paper cover—*Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.* He had bought it on his way down from London, but had not yet looked at it.

He opened it and glanced at a few pages; and then, sitting down where he

had been before, read the whole book straight through. He was strangely excited and wrought upon by it, and his mind was beginning to grope in the darkness after an idea. Yes, surely, this was the essence of portrait-painting: not to present a man as he was at a particular moment, in one particular part, with the emblem of one particular pursuit by him—an artist with his canvas, a sculptor with his clay—but the whole man, his Jekyll and his Hyde together in one picture.

Then in a moment his mind, as it were, found the handle of the door for which it had been groping in darkness, and flung it open, letting in the full blaze of a complete idea. There is only one human being on earth whom any artist who ever lived could paint completely. It is only a man himself who wholly knows both the side he turns to

the world and the side he would hide even from himself but cannot.

Frank's hands trembled nervously, and his breath came and went quickly. He would paint himself as no man yet had ever painted either himself or any one else. He would put his Jekyll and Hyde on the canvas for men to wonder at and to be silent before. He would do what no artist had ever yet done. He thought of that room in the Uffizi at Florence which holds the portrait of the Italian families, each painted by himself: Raphael, with his young, beardless face—Raphael, the painter, and no more; Andrea del Sarto, not the painter, but the liver. Each of them had painted marvellously outside themselves—one gift, one way of love. But he would do more: he would paint himself as the husband and lover of Margery, the Jekyll of himself, who

had known and knew the best capabilities for loving in his nature; and he would paint his Hyde, the man who had lived as other men in Paris—a Bohemian, careless, worthless, finding this thing and that honey at the moment, but to the soul wormwood and bitterness. The wormwood should be there, and the honey; his love for his wife and his rejection and loathing of those earlier days which he had thought were dead, but which had risen and without their honey. His own face, painted by himself, should be the book out of which he should be judged; for love and lust, happiness and misery, innocence and guilt—all unite their indelible marks there, and no one can ever efface the other.

Then, because he felt he was on the threshold of something new, and because all men, the strongest and weak-

est alike, are afraid, desperately afraid, of everything which they know nothing of, he became suddenly frightened.

What would this thing be? he asked himself. What would happen to himself when he had done it? Would he have raised his dead permanently? Would they refuse to be buried again now that he had of his own will perpetuated them in his art? And Margery, what would she have to say to the ghosts she would not allow him to tell her about?

But he was not a coward, and he did not mean to turn back because of this sudden spasm of fright. He would begin to-morrow; he could not help beginning at once, for, as he often told Margery, when the idea was ready he had to record it; the artist's inexorable need for expression could not be gain-

said or trifled with. It must come out.

Frank Trevor had a very mobile face, a face which his feelings played on freely as a breeze ruffling a moorland pool of water. His dark-gray eyes, set deep under their black eyebrows, were kindled and glowing with excitement. In such moments he looked strikingly handsome, though his features, taken singly, were not faultless. His mouth was too short and too full-lipped for actual beauty; but now, as he sat there, the very eagerness and vitality that came and went, as now one aspect of his idea and now another struck him, gave a fineness to every feature that made it worthy of an admiration which a more perfectly moulded face might well have failed to deserve.

But there was another fear as well, a fear so fantastic that he was almost

ashamed of it; but, as he thought of it, it grew upon him. He had always felt when he painted a portrait that virtue went out of him; that he put actually a part of his personality into his picture. What, then, would happen if he painted his own portrait completely? He knew his idea was fantastic and unreasonable; but the fear—a fear again of something that was new—was there, lurking in a shaded corner of his mind. But of this he could speak to Margery, and Margery's cool, smiling way of dealing with phantasms always had a most evaporating effect on them. Of the other fear he had wished to speak to her once, but she did not wish to hear, and he wished to speak to her of it no longer.

He looked at his watch and found it was nearly tea-time; he had been there over two hours, and he wondered to himself whether it had seemed more

like two years or two minutes. He rose to go, but before leaving the room he took a long look round it, feeling that he was looking at it for perhaps the last time; at any rate, that it could never look the same again.

"We only register a change in ourselves," he thought, "by the impression that other things make on us. If our taste changes we say that a thing we used to think beautiful is ugly. It is not so—it is the same as it always was. I cannot paint this picture without changing myself. What will the change be?"

The yellow, crumpled programme and the copy of *Jekyll and Hyde* lay together unregarded on the table. When we have drunk our medicine we do not concern ourselves with the medicine-bottle—unless, like the immortal Mrs. Pullet, we take a vague,

melancholy pleasure in recalling how much medicine we have taken. But that dear lady's worst enemies could not have found a single point in common between her and Frank Trevor.

CHAPTER II

JACK ARMITAGE, as we know, though he was aware it was tea-time, was filling his pipe. He had accomplished this to his satisfaction, and had just got it comfortably under way when Mrs. Trevor, also with tea in her mind, came down the steps leading from the terrace and strolled towards him.

"Where's Frank?" she asked. "I thought he said he was going to sit about with you till tea?"

"He said so," said Jack; "but he went into his studio to get a book, and he has not appeared since."

"Well, I suppose he's in the house," she said. "In any case it's five, and we

sha'n't get more than two hours on the river. So come in."

Jack often caught himself regretting he was not a portrait-painter when he looked at Mrs. Trevor. She was, he told himself, one of the beauties of all time, and her black hair, black eyes, and delicately chiselled nose had caused many young men on the slightest acquaintance to wish that she had not decided to change her maiden name to Trevor. It was also noticeable that as their acquaintance became less slight their regret became proportionately keener. Frank had done a portrait of her, the first that brought him prominently into notice, and, as Jack thought, his best. By one of those daring experiments which in his hands seemed always to succeed, he had represented her a tall, stately figure, dressed in white, standing in front of a great Chinese

screen covered with writhing dragons in blue and gold, a nightmare of hideous forms in wonderful colors. It was a bold experiment, but certainly, to Jack's mind, he had managed with miraculous success to bring out what was almost as characteristic of his wife's mind as her beauty was of her body, and which, for want of a better word, he called her wholesomeness. The contrast between that and the exquisite deformities behind her hit eyes, so to speak, straight in the face. But it hit fair, and it was triumphant.

Mrs. Trevor paused on the edge of the gravel-path and picked up the lonely tennis-ball.

"To think that it should have been there all the time!" she said. "How blind you are, Mr. Armitage!"

Jack rose and knocked out his pipe. "The Fates are unkind," he said. "You

call me in to tea just when I've lit my pipe, and then go and blame me for not finding the tennis-ball, which you told me was not worth while looking for."

"I didn't know it was in the gutter," she said. "I thought it had gone into the flower-beds."

"Nor did I know it was in the gutter, or I should have looked for it there."

Margery laughed.

"I wish you were stopping on longer," she said, "and not going to-morrow. Surely you needn't go?"

"You are too kind, but the Fates are still unkind," he said. "I have already put it off a week, during which time my brother has been languishing alone at New Quay."

"To New Quay? I didn't know you were going there. Frank and I know New Quay very well."

Frank was in the drawing-room when they went in, giving orders that the studio should be thoroughly swept out and dusted that evening.

"I'm going to begin painting to-morrow," he announced, abruptly, to the others as they came in.

Margery turned to Jack.

"No more tennis for me unless you stop," she said. "Have you ever been with us when Frank is painting? I see nothing of him all day, and he gobbles his meals and scowls at the butler."

The footman came in again with the tea-things.

"And take that big looking-glass out of the spare bedroom," said Frank to him, "and put it in the studio."

"What do you want a looking-glass for?" asked his wife, as the man left the room.

Frank got up, and walked restlessly

up and down. "I begin to-morrow," he said; "I've got the idea ready. I can see it. Until then it is no use trying to paint; but when that comes, it is no use not trying."

"But what's the looking-glass for?" repeated Margery.

"Ah, yes, I haven't told you. I'm going to paint a portrait of myself."

"That's my advice," observed Margery. "I've often suggested that to you, haven't I, Frank?"

"You have. I wonder if you did wisely? This afternoon, however, other things suggested it to me."

"Have you been meditating?" asked Jack, sympathetically. "I've been meditating all afternoon. Why didn't you come out, as you said you would, and meditate with me?"

"I had a little private meditation of

my own," said Frank. "It demanded solitude."

"Is it bills?" asked Margery. "You know, dear, I told you that you'd be sorry for paying a hundred guineas for that horse."

Frank laughed.

"No, it's not bills—at least, not bills that make demands of cash. Give me some tea, Margy."

The evening was warm and fine, but cloudless, and after dinner the three sat out on the terrace listening to the foot-falls of night stealing on tiptoe in the woods round them. The full moon, shining through white skeins of drifting cloud, cast a strange, diffused light, and the air, alert with the coming rain, seemed full of those delicate scents which are imperceptible during the day. Once a hare ran out from the cover across the lawn, where it sat up for a few moments,

with ears cocked forward, until it heard the rustle of Margery's dress, as she moved to look in the direction of Frank's finger pointing at it, and then scuttled noiselessly off.

They had been silent for some little time, but at last Frank spoke. He wanted to tell Margery of his fantastic fear, that fear which she might hear about; or, rather, to let her find it out, and pour cool common-sense on it.

"I feel just as I did on my last night at home, before I went to school for the first time," he said. "I feel as if I had never painted a portrait before. I have had a long holiday, I know; but still it is not as if I had never been to school before. I wonder why I feel like that?"

"Most of one's fears are for very harmless things," observed Jack. "One sees a bogie and runs away, but it is probably only a turnip and a candle.

Naturally one is nervous about a new thing. One doesn't quite know what it may turn out to be. But, as a rule, if it isn't a turnip and a candle, it is a sheet and a mask. Equally inoffensive really, but unexpected."

"Ah, but I don't usually feel like that," said Frank. "In fact, I never have before. One is like a plant. When one has flowered once, it is fairly certain that the next flowers will be like the last, if one puts anything of one's self into it. Of course if one faces one's self one may put out a monstrosity, but I am not facing myself. Yet, somehow, I am as afraid as if I were going to produce something horrible and unnatural. But I can't face myself; I can't blossom under glass."

"That's such a nice theory for you, dear," said Margery, "especially if you are inclined to be lazy."

Frank made a little hopeless gesture of impatience.

"Lazy, industrious—industrious, lazy; what have those to do with it? You don't understand me a bit. When the time has come that I should paint, I do so inevitably; if the time has not come, it is impossible for me to paint. I know that you think artists are idle, desultory, Bohemian, irregular. That is part of their nature as artists. A man who grinds out so much a day is not and cannot be an artist. The sap flows, and we bud; the sap recedes, and for us it is winter-time. You do not call a tree lazy in winter because it does not put out leaves?"

"But a tree, at any rate, is regular," said Margery; "besides, evergreens."

"Yes, and everlasting flowers," said Frank, impatiently. "The tree is only a simile. But we are not dead when

we don't produce any more than the tree is dead in December."

Margery frowned. This theory of Frank's was her pet aversion, but she could not get him to give it up.

"Then do you mean to say that all effort is valueless?"

"No, no!" cried Frank; "the whole process of production is frantic, passionate effort to realize what one sees. But no amount of effort will make one see anything. I could do you a picture, which you would probably think very pretty, every day, if you liked, of 'Love in a Cottage,' or some such inanity."

Jack crossed his legs, thoughtfully.

"The great objection of love in a cottage," he said, "is that it is so hard to find a really suitable cottage."

Frank laughed. "A courageous attempt to change the subject," he said.

"But I'm not going to talk nonsense to-night."

"I think you're talking awful nonsense, dear," said Margery, candidly.

"You will see I am serious in a minute," said Frank. "I was saying I could paint that sort of thing at any time, but it would not be part of me. And the only pictures worth doing are those which are part of one's self. Every real picture tells you, of course, something about what it represents; but it tells you a great deal about the man who painted it, and that is the most important of the two. And I cannot—and, what is more, I don't choose to—paint anything into which I do not put part of myself."

"Mind you look about the woods after I've gone," said Jack, "and if you see a leg or an arm of mine lying about, send it to me, Beach Hotel, New Quay."

Frank threw himself back in his chair with a laugh.

"My dear Jack," he said, "for a clever man you are a confounded idiot. No one ever accused you of putting a nail-paring of your own into any of your pictures. Of course you are a landscape-painter—that makes a certain difference. A landscape-painter paints what he sees, and only some of that; a portrait-painter—a real portrait-painter—paints what he knows and feels, and when he paints the virtue goes out of him."

"And the more he knows, the more virtue goes out of him, I suppose," said Jack. "You know yourself pretty well—what will happen when you paint yourself?"

Frank grew suddenly grave.

"That's exactly what I want to know myself. That was what I meant when

I said I felt like a little boy going to school for the first time—it will be something new. I have only painted four portraits in my life, and each of them definitely took something out of me—changed me; and from each—I am telling you sober truth—I absorbed something of the sitter. And when I paint myself—"

"I suppose you will go out like a candle," interrupted Jack. "Total disappearance of a rising English artist; and of the portrait, what? Shall we think it is you? Will it walk about and talk? Will it get your vitality?"

Frank got quickly out of his chair and stood before them. His thin, tall figure looked almost ghostly in the strange half-light, and he spoke rapidly and excitedly.

"That is exactly what I am afraid of," he said. "I am afraid—I confess

it—I am afraid of many things about this portrait, and that is one of them. I began to paint myself once before—I have never told even Margery this—but I had to stop. But this afternoon several things made themselves irresistible, and I must try again. I was in bad health when I tried before, and one evening when I went into the studio and saw it—it was more than half finished—I had a sudden giddy feeling that I did not know which was me—the portrait or myself. I knew I was on the verge of something new and unknown, that if I went on with it I should go mad or go to heaven; and when I moved towards it I saw it—I *did* see it—take a step towards me."

"Looking-glass," said Margery. "Go on, dear."

"Then I was frightened. I ran away. Next day I came back and tore the pict-



"'I AM AFRAID—I CONFESS IT'"

ure into shreds. But now I am braver. Besides, brave or not, I must do it. I lost a great deal, I know, by not going on with it, but I could not. Oh yes, you may laugh if you like, but it is true. You may even say that what I lost was exactly what one always does lose when one is afraid of doing something. One loses self-command. One is less able to do the thing next time one tries. I lost all that, but I lost a great deal more: I lost the chance of knowing what happens to a man if he parts with himself."

"Don't be silly, Frank," said Margery, suddenly. "How can a man part with himself?"

"In two ways at least. He may go mad or he may die. I dare say it doesn't matter much, if one only has produced something worth producing; but it frightened me."

Despite herself, perhaps because fear is the most contagious of diseases, Margery felt a little frightened, too, about this new portrait. But she rallied.

"When the time comes for us to die we die," she said, "and we can't help it. But we can all avoid being very silly while we live—at least, you can, and you are the case in point."

Frank resumed his seat, and spoke less quickly and excitedly.

"I know it all sounds ridiculous and absurd," he said; "but if I paint my portrait as I think I am going to, I shall put all myself into it. It will be a wonderful thing—there will be no picture like it. But I tell you, plainly and soberly—I am not feverish, you may feel my pulse if you like—that if I paint it as I believe I can, something will happen to me. It will be my soul as well as my body you will see there. Ah,

there are a hundred dangers in the way. What will happen to me I don't pretend to guess. Moreover, I am frightened about it."

Once again, for a moment, Margery was frightened too. Frank's fear and earnestness were very catching. But she summoned her common-sense to her aid. Such things did not happen; it was impossible in a civilized country towards the end of the nineteenth century.

"Oh, my dear boy," she said, "it is so like you to tell us that it will be a wonderful thing, and that there will be no picture like it. It will be even more like you, if, after you have made an admirable beginning, you say it is a horror and put your foot through it, vowing you will never set brush to canvas again. I suppose it is all part of the artistic temperament."

Frank thought of his other fear, of which he could not tell Margery, which she had refused to hear of before. He laid his hand on her arm.

"Margery, tell me not to do it," he said, earnestly. "If you will tell me not to do it, I won't."

"My dear Frank, you told us just now that it was inevitable you should. But why should I tell you not to do it? I think it would be the best thing in the world for you."

"Well, we shall see. Jack, why should you go away to-morrow? Why not stop and be a witness?"

"No, I must go," said Jack, "but if Mrs. Trevor will send me a post-card, or wire, if you show any grave symptoms of going to Heaven or Bedlam, I will come back at once — I promise that. Dear me, how anxious I shall feel! Just these words, you know: 'Mr. Trev-

or going to Bedlam' or 'going to Heaven,' and I'll come at once. But I must go to-morrow. I've been expected at New Quay for a week. Besides, I've painted so many beech-trees here that they will say I am going to paint all the trees in England, just as Moore has painted all the English Channel. I hear he's begun on the Atlantic."

Frank laughed.

"I fear he certainly has painted a great many square miles of sea. However, supposing they lost all the Admiralty charts, how useful it would be! They would soon be able to reproduce them from his pictures, for they certainly are exactly like the sea."

"But they are all like the Bellman's chart in the 'Hunting of the Shark,'" said Margery, "without the least vestige of land."

"What would be the effect on you,

Frank," asked the other, "if you painted a few hundred miles of sea? I suppose you would be found drowned in your studio some morning, and they would be able to fix the place where you were drowned by seeing what you were painting last. But there are difficulties in the way."

"He must be very careful only to paint shallow places," said Margery, "where he can't be drowned. Oh, Frank, perhaps it's your astral body that goes hopping about from picture to picture!"

"Astral fiddlesticks!" said Frank. "Come, let's go in."

He paused for a moment on the threshold of the long French window opening into the drawing-room.

"But if any one, particularly you, Margery," he said, "ever mistakes my portrait for myself, I shall know that

the particular fear I have been telling you about is likely to be realized. And then, if you wish, we will discuss the advisability of my going on with it. But I begin to-morrow."

CHAPTER III

Armitage had to leave at half-past eight the next morning, for it was a ten-mile drive to Truro, the nearest station, and he breakfasted alone. Rain had fallen heavily during the night, but it had cleared up before morning, and everything looked deliciously fresh and clean. Ten minutes before his carriage came round Margery appeared, and they walked together up and down the terrace until it was time for him to be off. Margery was looking a little tired and worried, as if she had not slept well.

"I shall have breakfast with Frank in his studio after you have gone," she

said, "so until your carriage comes we'll take a turn out-of-doors. There is something so extraordinarily sweet about the open air."

"Frank didn't seem to me to profit by it much last night."

Margery frowned. "I don't know what's the matter with me," she said. "All that nonsense which Frank talked last night must have got on my nerves. Don't you know those long, half-waking dreams one has sometimes when one is not quite certain whether what one hears or sees is real or not? Once last night I woke like that. I thought at first it was part of my dream, and heard Frank talking in his sleep. 'Margery,' he said, 'that isn't me at all. This is me. Surely you know me. Do I look so terrible?'"

"Why should he think he looked terrible?" said Jack.

"I don't know. Then he went rambling on: 'I tried to bury it, and you would not let me tell you.' Of course, his mind must have been running on what he said yesterday evening as we came in, for he went on repeating, 'Don't you know me? Don't you know me?' And this morning he got up at daybreak, and I haven't seen him since."

Margery stopped to pick a couple of rosebuds and put them in the front of her dress. She had no hat on, and the light wind blew through her hair with a deliciously bracing effect. She turned towards the sea, and sniffed in the salt freshness with wide nostrils like a young thorough-bred horse.

"If Frank would only be out-of-doors for two hours a day while he was working, I shouldn't mind," she said; "but he sticks in his studio, and then his di-

gestion gets out of order, and he becomes astral. And my mother wants us to go to the Lizard to-morrow—they've taken a house for the summer—and spend a couple of days. I think I shall go, but yet I don't like to leave Frank. It's no use trying to get him to come."

"But you aren't nervous, are you?" asked Jack. "I thought you were so particularly sensible last night. Frank is awfully fantastic—he always was; but fundamentally he's sane enough. Probably it will be a wonderful picture—he is usually right about his pictures—and he will be excessively nervous and irritable while he is doing it, and refreshingly idle when it's done. That's the way he usually has."

"But it's an unhealthy way of doing things," said Margery. "I wish he was more regular."

"The wind bloweth where it listeth," said Jack, "and it blows very often on him. Isn't that enough?"

"Well, then, I wish I had a barometer," said she. "The hurricane comes down without warning. But I'm not nervous—at least, I don't mean to be. It is just one of Frank's ridiculous notions. All the same, as he said last night, when he does do a really good portrait it has a very definite effect on him."

"In what way? I don't understand."

"Do you remember his picture of Mr. Bracebridge? It was in the Academy the year after his portrait of me, though it was painted first. You know every one said it was wicked to paint a thing like that—that he might as well have painted Mr. Bracebridge without any clothes on as without any body on."

"Without any body on?"

"Yes; somehow—even I felt it, and I am not artistic—Frank managed to paint his soul. I could have written an exhaustive analysis of Mr. Bracebridge's character from that portrait."

"And the effect on Frank?"

"Mr. Bracebridge is a charming man, you know," said Margery, "but he is really unable to tell the truth. It sounds very ridiculous, but for six weeks Frank really became the most awful liar."

Jack stopped short.

"But the thing is absurd. In any case, what does he mean by saying that he doesn't know what will happen when he paints himself? It seems to me that in the case of Mr. Bracebridge, so far from Frank putting a lot of himself into the picture, he unfortunately absorbed a lot of Mr. Bracebridge into himself."

"Frank was quite unconscious he had become a liar," said Margery; "but what he means is this: he put a lot of his own personality into the picture—really the whole thing is so absurd that I am ashamed to tell you about it—and consequently weakened himself, or, as he would express it, emptied himself. And being in this state, Mr. Bracebridge's little weakness impressed itself on him. That certainly happened, and it seems to me only likely. We are all affected by any one with whom we are much taken up, but what Frank assumes is the loss of his own personality. That is absurd."

"Frank was like a hypnotic subject, in fact," said Jack—"at least, they say that they give themselves up, and subject themselves to another's will. But even then—and, like you, I think the whole thing is nonsense—how will the

painting of his own portrait affect him?"

"Like this: he puts his whole personality into it and receives nothing in exchange; no other personality will, so to speak, feed him. Really, he is very silly."

The sound of carriage-wheels caused them to turn in their stroll and walk back again to the house.

"Incidentally," asked Jack, "how did he cease to be a liar?"

Margery looked at him openly and frankly.

"Oh, by painting me. I am very truthful."

"Did he absorb any other characteristic?"

"Yes; he became less fantastic for a time. You see I am very unimaginative."

"Then you had better get him to

paint another portrait of you while he is doing this. Won't that preserve the balance?"

The fresh air and sunshine were having their legitimate effect on Margery, and had sufficiently cancelled her troubled night. She broke out into a light laugh.

"Oh, that would be too dreadfully complicated," she said. "Let's see—what would happen? He would put his personality into both portraits, and get back some of mine, and so he would cease to be himself and become a watery reminiscence of me. It's as bad as equations. Really, Mr. Armitage, I am beginning to think you believe in it yourself."

"No, I don't; not a bit more than you do. Well, I must say good-bye to Frank, and tell him not to become too astral."

Frank was standing in front of his easel with the charcoal in his hand. He had caught a very characteristic pose of his figure with extraordinary success, and Margery and Jack exchanged a rapid glance as they saw it; for though they had both avowed that they did not believe a word of "Frank's nonsense," they both felt it to be a certain relief when they saw how brilliantly Frank had sketched it in. There was a certain sureness about his lines that seemed to give both Bedlam and Heaven a most satisfactory remoteness. But they both noticed that Frank had drawn the face already and erased it, and it was only represented by a few half-obliterated lines.

Frank did not look up when they entered, and Jack crossed the room to him.

"I'm just off," he said, seeing that

the other did not look up, "and I've come to say good-bye. I've enjoyed my visit enormously—quite enormously."

Frank started and winced as if he had been struck, and, looking up, saw Armitage for the first time. He drew his hand over his eyes as if he had just been awakened and his eyes were still heavy with sleep.

"Ah, Jack, I didn't see you. What time is it? Where are you going?"

Even as he spoke he turned to the easel again and went on drawing.

"I'm going away," said Jack. "I'm going to New Quay."

"Of course you are. Well, good-bye. Drop in and see us at any time. I'm very busy," and he was lost in his work.

Jack laid his hand on his shoulder.

"Don't overdo it, old boy," he said. "You soon knock up, you know, if you

don't take exercise. And it won't be half so good if you slave at it all day. Half the artistic sense is good digestion."

"No, I'll be very careful," said Frank, half to himself. "Take your hand away, please; I'm drawing in that piece."

"I shall tell them to send breakfast in here at once, Frank," said Margery. "I'm going to have breakfast here with you."

Frank made no reply, and the two left the room together. Armitage was suddenly loath to go, but the carriage was at the door, and it was obviously absurd to stop just because — because Frank had talked a great deal of nonsense the evening before, and had made a wonderfully clever sketch of himself, but for some reason had been dissatisfied with the drawing of the face. Some-

how that little point interested him, and he wanted to assure himself that no significance was to be attached to it. Besides, Frank was in better hands than his, for he left behind him this splendidly sensible woman, a sort of apotheosis of common-sense, in whom that rare but prosaic virtue became something keen and subtle. She had said that she thought all this idea of Frank's about his personality was ridiculous. Besides, she could always telegraph to New Quay.

That obliterated face had caught Margery's attention as well as his, and as they walked down the corridor to the front door she said:

"Did you notice that Frank had drawn in the face and then rubbed it out?"

"Yes; I wondered if you had noticed it too."

"Why do you think he did that?" asked Margery.

"I don't know; I suppose it didn't satisfy him."

Margery frowned.

"I don't know either. Frank is usually so rapid about the drawing. And he always draws the face as soon as he has got a few of the lines of the body in. Really I don't know, only I noticed it."

But just before Jack drove off an impulse prompted him to say, "Beach Hotel, New Quay, you know. I will be sure to come if you telegraph."

"Yes, many thanks. I shall remember. It is very good of you to promise to come at once; but I don't think it's very likely, you know, that I shall telegraph. Good-bye."

Margery waited till the carriage disappeared between the trees, and then

went in to tell them to send breakfast to the studio at once. And as she walked back there she allowed to herself, with her habitual honesty, that her will was in collision with her inclinations. She had a great gift of forcing herself to do anything which her will told her she had better do. In dealing with other people also her will asserted its predominance, and if it was in collision with theirs they had been heard to remark that she was obstinate, while if it went in harness with them they said, "Dear Margery is so firm!" and congratulated themselves and her. And when, as on this occasion, her will was in collision with her own inclinations, it exhibited itself in a splendid self-control.

She felt a trifle lonely and inadequate when she saw Armitage drive off; but, as she told herself, her sense of loneli-

ness and inadequacy were not due to the fact that she was frightened at being alone with Frank and his ghostly enemies, but because she had determined to fight those ghostly enemies; to force Frank, as far as in her lay, to paint the portrait of himself, and finish it at all costs. This, she persuaded herself, would be a real and final defeat of his fantastic tendencies, his irregularity, his fits of complete laziness whenever ideas did not beat loud at the door of his imagination. It was absurd to sit at home and wait for the idea to call; art had to look for ideas in all sorts of places. And it was with a fine show of justification that she said to herself that many of his wild ideas would be routed if she could only make him go through with this portrait, and see him stand in front of the finished work and say, "It is all I ever hoped it

would be, and I am still a sane man." Surely if she could help in any way to make him do that, it would be no slight cause for self-congratulation. Genius was often bitter, but Frank was not that; more often it was fantastic, and Frank should be fantastic no longer.

"What harm can come to him through this?" she reasoned. "I am quite sure"—already she liked to tell herself she was quite sure—"that he will not lose his personality, because such things do not happen. That he will be awfully savage and silent while he is painting I fully expect; but that does not matter. What does matter is that he should see, when it is finished, what a goose he has been."

Breakfast had just been brought in when Margery returned to the studio, but Frank was still working. She sat

down at once and began to make tea.

"You'd much better have your breakfast now," she said, "and go on working afterwards; but I suppose, as usual, you will let everything get cold and nasty. Eggs and bacon and cold grouse. I'm going to begin."

Margery helped herself to eggs and bacon, and poured out some tea; but she had scarcely caught the flavor of her first sip when Frank suddenly left his canvas and sat down by her.

"I'm tired," he said, "and my hand is heavy."

"It will be lighter after breakfast," said Margery, cheerfully. "Eat, Frank."

"No, I shall eat soon. I want to sit by you and look at you. Margery darling, what a trial it must be to have me for a husband!"

There was something very wistful

and pathetic in his voice, and Margery felt moved.

"Ah, Frank," she said, "I don't find it so."

Frank was looking at her with eager eyes, as a dog looks at his master. He had taken up her hand, and was stroking it gently with his long, nervous fingers. Suddenly he jumped up.

"I see, I see," he said. "I have been drawing something that wasn't me at all. I can do it now. Margery, will you come and stand very close to me, so that when I look in the glass I can see you too?"

Margery rose from her half-eaten breakfast, and went across the room to where his easel was.

"So?" she said.

Frank picked up the charcoal, and began drawing rapidly. In ten minutes he had done what he had been trying to do for the last two hours.

"There," he said, "that is your husband. And now go back to your breakfast, Margery. I must begin to paint at once!"

Margery looked at the face he had drawn.

"Why, it is you," she said. "And, Frank, you look just as you looked when I met you that morning on the beach at New Quay."

"That is what I mean," said Frank.

CHAPTER IV

Margery finished her breakfast with a sense of relief. She wanted this portrait to be done quickly and easily, without incident or difficulty, and the fact that Frank had completely got over his odd inability to draw the face as he wished was very encouraging. She left a parting injunction with him to eat his breakfast before lunch, and take himself out for half an hour's stroll.

Frank got his palette ready and stood brush in hand. He glanced at his own reflection in the looking-glass and back to the face on the canvas, then back again.

"It is very odd," he murmured to

himself. "I saw it so clearly just now."

He stood looking from one to the other, and a frown gathered on his face. When Margery had been there with him he had seen something quite different to what he saw now. He had seen himself as she saw him, but the face which frowned back at him from the looking-glass was the face of another man.

He laid the palette and the dry brushes down, and took a piece of paper and began drawing on it. Line for line he reproduced the face he had drawn earlier in the morning, which he had erased once.

"It is no good," he said; "I must draw what I am, not what Margery thinks me." And, taking a piece of bread-crumb from the breakfast-table, he rubbed out the face which he had drawn

when Margery was standing at his side. He looked again at the sketch he had made. He felt that he could not draw it any other way. The eyelids were a little drooped; the whole face a little faded, but still eager. The noises of a gay city were in its ears; the eyes, half unfocussed, looking outward and a little sideways, were half amused, half wearied. The mouth smiled slightly, and the lips were parted; but the smile was not altogether wholesome. But through it all the face had a wistful expression—the tired eyes seemed to long for something different from the things which were sweet and bitter and bad, but had not the strength to cease from looking on them.

Frank took up his crayon again. There was still something about the mouth which did not satisfy him. He looked at his reflection and back again

several times before he saw what was wanting. Then he made two rapid strokes, increasing the line of shadow in the mouth, and the thing was finished. The expression he had tried to catch for so long was there, and he wondered whether Margery would see it with the same eyes as he did.

Later in the morning Margery strolled into the studio again, expecting to find him painting. He was drawing busily when she entered, and did not look up. The face which she had seen him draw at breakfast-time was gone, and some faintly indicated lines of another face had taken its place. Frank always drew with extreme care, but usually with great rapidity, and to her eyes he seemed to have done nothing since she had left him.

"Well, how goes it?" she asked.

"It goes slowly, but I am working very carefully," he said.

He stood away from the portrait and let her see it. He had strengthened the outline since she had been in at breakfast, and sketched in the background.

"Why, it's splendid!" she said. "That's exactly the way you loll on the edge of the table. Frank, it's awfully good. But why have you rubbed out the face?"

Frank looked up.

"Ah, yes; I rubbed it out directly after you left me, and made a sketch of what it was going to be like, and I forgot to put it in again. I'll do it now. There is a great deal of careful work about the hands, too."

"What are you doing?" asked Margery, examining them. "It looks as if you were smoothing out a crumpled piece of paper."

"Ah, you think that?" said Frank, absently. "I wondered if you would

think I was crumpling a piece of paper up."

"Oh no," said she, confidently; "you are smoothing it out. What does it mean? What's the paper—a programme or something?"

"Yes, a programme or something."

He emphasized the faint lines on the face, and again stood aside.

"Look!"

"Oh, Frank, that won't do at all. You look as if you were a convict or something horrible, or as if that piece of paper in your hands was an unpaid bill which you were trying not to pay."

Frank laughed a little bitter laugh.

"My drawing has been very successful," he said.

Margery was still looking at the face.

"It is horrible," she said. "Yet I don't see where it is wrong. It's very like you, somehow."

She looked from the picture to her husband, and saw that his face was puzzled and anxious.

"I see what it is," she said. "You've been worrying and growling over it till your face really began to look something like what you were drawing. Oh, Frank, you haven't had breakfast yet. Sit down and have it at once. It all comes of having no breakfast."

"Is that all, do you think?" asked he. "Is that the face of a man who is only guilty of not eating his breakfast? It looks to me guilty, somehow."

"Yes, that's why it's guilty. Your face is guilty, too. When you've eaten your breakfast and smoked that horrid little black pipe of yours, it won't look guilty any more."

Frank was looking at what he had done with the air of a disinterested spectator.

"It seems to me that that brute there has done something worse than not eat his breakfast," he said.

"Nonsense. I'm going to get you some fresh tea because this is cold, and there's that sweet little cold grouse dying, so to speak, to be eaten. You begin on it while I get the tea."

Frank felt exhausted and hungry, and he sat down and proceeded to cut the "sweet little grouse" of which Margery had spoken. He had a strange sense of having just awakened from a dream, or else having just fallen asleep and begun dreaming. He could not tell which seemed the most real—the hours he had just spent before the canvas, or the present moment with Margery in his thoughts. He only knew that the two were quite distinct and different.

Suddenly he dropped his knife and fork with a crash, and turned to the

picture again. Yes, there was no doubt about it. There was a curious look in the lines of the face, especially in the mouth, which suggested guilt; and yet, as Margery had said, it was very like him.

Margery's fears and doubts had returned to her for a moment with renewed force as she looked at the face Frank had drawn, but she had spent an hour out-of-doors, and the fresh autumn air had been hellebore to fantastic thoughts, and, by a violent effort, she had torn her vague disquiet out of her mind, and her manner to Frank had been perfectly natural. She soon returned with a teapot of fresh tea, and chatted to him while he breakfasted.

"What part of your personality has gone this morning?" she asked. "It seems to me that you are just as sulky as you always are when you are paint-

ing. That's unfortunate, because this afternoon we play tennis at the Fortescues', and if you are sulky, why, there'll be a pair of you—you and Mr. F. Oh, but what a dreadful man, Frank! I don't love him one bit more than one Christian is bound to love another, and he's a Presbyterian at that!"

"Oh, I can't go to the Fortescues'," said Frank. "I want to get on with this. I've been working very hard, yet I haven't finished drawing it yet."

"Don't interrupt," said Margery. "Then we come home after tea, and the Rev. Mr. Greenock dines with us, and the Rev. Mrs. — particularly the Rev. Mrs."

"There are some people," said Frank, "who make me feel as I imagine rabbits must feel when they find a ferret has been put into their burrow—I want to run away."

"Yes, dear, I know exactly what you mean. She's got plenty of personality."

Margery's presence was wonderfully soothing to Frank. She carried an atmosphere of sanity about with her which could not fail to make itself felt. He leaned back in his chair and thought no more of the portrait.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you," she went on. "Mother wants us both to come over to the Lizard and stay with her a couple of nights. She leaves on Thursday, you know, and I've hardly seen her."

"I can't possibly go," said Frank. "I can't leave my painting when I've only just begun it."

"I wish you'd come," said Margery.

"Margery, how silly you are! I couldn't possibly. But—but there's no reason why you shouldn't go."

He suddenly sprang up.

"Margery, tell me not to go on with it," he said, "and if you'll do that I'll come. But I can't leave it."

"Frank, how silly you are. I shall do nothing of the kind. I wish you would leave it for a couple of days and come with me, but I know it's no use arguing with you. I shall go, I think, for one night, not for two; so if I start to-morrow morning I shall get back on Friday evening. I must see mother again before she leaves Cornwall."

Frank walked back to the easel.

"What's the matter with it?" he said, impatiently.

"You've only made yourself look very cross, dear," said Margery, placidly. "You often do look cross, you know, but I should not advise you to paint yourself as cross as you are. Oh, Frank, I've got a brilliant idea!"

"What's that?"

"Why, put all the crossness out of your personality into the picture, and then you'll never be cross any more. Oh, I'm so glad I thought of that!"

Frank had picked up the charcoal and put a few finishing lines to the face.

"I've drawn it in carefully and freely, as if it was a black-and-white sketch," he said. "There, that's what I saw all morning, except just when you were breakfasting here."

"Oh, Frank, you do look a brute!" said Margery. "I'm not going to stop in the room with that, nor are you, because you are coming for a little walk till lunch-time. You have to see Hooper about mending that gate down to the rocks, and tell him, when he marks out the tennis-court, he must do it according to measurement, and not as his own

exuberant fancy prompts. It's about a hundred feet long. Come away out."

Frank turned from the easel.

"Yes, I'll come," he said. "I can't get on with that just now; I don't know why; but unless I paint it as I see it I can't paint it at all, and I see it like that."

"Well, nobody can say you've flattered yourself," said Margery, consolingly.

They strolled out through the sweet-smelling woods, full of scents after the night's rain, and already beginning to turn gold and russet. A light mist still hung over the edges of the estuary, and five miles away, at Falmouth Harbor, the tall masts of the ships seemed to prick the skein of vapor like needles. The tide was up, and covered more than half of the little iron steps below the gate which had to be repaired, and long,

brown-fingered sea-weed swung to and fro in the gentle swell of the water, like the hands of some blind man groping upward for light. Color, air, and sound alike seemed subdued and mellow, and with Margery by him Frank's phantoms seemed to catch something of the prevailing tranquillity, and retired into the dim, aqueous mists, instead of hovering insistently round him, black-winged, scarlet-robed.

"I think I'll come to the Fortescues', after all, this afternoon," said Frank, as they turned homeward.

"Why, of course you will."

"There's no 'of course' about it, dear," said Frank; "but I feel as if I couldn't paint to-day."

"How dreadfully lazy you are!" said Margery, inconsistently. "You'd never do anything if it wasn't for me. But you must promise to work very hard

and sensibly to-morrow and next day, and when I come back I shall expect to see it more than half finished."

"Sensibly!" said Frank, impatiently; "there is no such thing. All good work is done in a sort of madness or somnambulism—I don't know which. Everything worth doing is done by men possessed of demons."

"The demon of crossness seems to have haunted you this morning," said Margery. "But you needn't make yourself crosser than is consistent with truth."

"But supposing I can't paint it in any other way than what you saw this morning?" asked Frank. "What am I to do, then?"

"There! Now you are asking my advice," said Margery, triumphantly, "although you always insist that I know nothing about art. Why, of course,

you must paint it as you see it. You are forever saying that yourself."

"Well, you won't like it," said Frank.

"If you'll promise to eat your breakfast at nine and your lunch at two, and not work more than seven hours a day and go out not less than three, I will chance it. Mr. Armitage was so right when he said that good digestion was half the artistic sense."

"And the other half is bad dreams," said Frank.

"No; if you have good digestion, you don't have bad dreams."

Frank walked on in silence.

"If I only knew what was the matter with it," he said, at length, "I could correct it. But I don't, and I think it must be right. It's very odd."

"It's not a bit odd; it's only because you didn't eat your breakfast. And now you've got to eat your lunch."

Frank smoked a cigarette in his studio afterwards while Margery was getting ready. Soon he heard her calling, and got up to go. He stood for a moment in front of the portrait before leaving the room, and a momentary spasm of uncontrollable fear seized him.

"My God!" he said, "she goes away to-morrow; and I—I shall be left alone with this!"

CHAPTER V

Frank got through his tennis-party without discredit. Margery's presence seemed to have exorcised—for the time being, at any rate—the demon which he said possessed him, and there was no apparent similarity between his nature and Mr. Fortescue's. Ease of manner and a certain picturesqueness were natural to him, and Margery found herself forgetting the slightly disturbing events of the last twenty-four hours.

Mr. and Mrs. Greenock, who dined with them that evening, were gifted with oppressive personalities. Frank once said that he always felt as if Raphael's clouds had descended on

him when he talked to this gentleman. Raphael's clouds, he maintained, were very likely big with blessing, but were somewhat solid in texture, and resembled benedictory feather-beds rather than benedictory clouds. The environment of benediction was possibly good for one in the long-run, but he himself considered it rather suffocating at the time. Mrs. Greenock, on the other hand, was an example of what Americans perhaps mean by a "very bright woman." She was oppressively bright. She had bright blue eyes, which suggested buttons covered with shiny American cloth, and a nose like a ship's prow, which seemed to cut the air when she moved. She asked artists questions about their art and musicians about their music, and if she had met a crossing-sweeper she would certainly have asked him questions about his crossing. This, she

was persuaded, was the best way of improving an already superior intellect, as hers admittedly was. There is a great deal to be said for her view—there always was a great deal to be said for her views, and she usually said most of it herself. She always made a point of saying that she could remember anything you happened to tell her, in order to give Tom, or Harry, or Jane a really professional opinion in case they should happen to ask her questions on the subject in hand. She may, in fact, be described as a lioness-woman, who bore away all possible scraps to feed her whelps. Her methods of obtaining the scraps, however, as Frank had suggested, reminded one of a ferret at work. She had the same bright, cruel way of peering restlessly about.

Mr. and Mrs. Greenock were loudly and insistently punctual, and when

Frank came into the drawing-room that evening he found his guests already there. Mrs. Greenock was snapping up pieces of information from Margery, and Mr. Greenock's attitude gave the beholder to understand that the blessing of the Church hovered over this instructive intercourse.

Mrs. Greenock instantly annexed Frank, as being able to give her more professional, and therefore more nutritive, scraps of intellectual food than his wife. She had a rich barytone voice and an impressive delivery.

"I'm sure you'll think me dreadfully ignorant," she said; "but when dear Kate asked me when Leonardo died I was unable to tell her within ten years. Now, what was the date?"

"I really could not say for certain," said Frank; "I forget the exact year, if I ever knew it."

Mrs. Greenock heaved a sigh of relief.

"Thank you so much, Mr. Trevor," she said. "Then may I tell dear Kate that even you don't know for certain, and so it cannot have been an epoch-making year? When one knows so little and wants to know so much, it is always worth while remembering that there is something one need not know. Now, which would you say was the most epoch-making year in the history of Art?"

Frank felt helpless with the bright, cruel eyes of the ferret fastened on his face, and he shifted nervously from one foot to the other.

"It would be hard to say that any one year was epoch-making," he replied; "but I should say that the Italian Renaissance generally was the greatest epoch. May I take you in to dinner?"

Mrs. Greenock turned her eyes up to the ceiling as if in a sudden spasm of gratitude.

"Thank you so much for telling me that. Algernon dear, did you hear what Mr. Trevor said about the Italian Renaissance? He agrees with us."

Mrs. Greenock unfolded her napkin as if she were in expectation of finding the manna of professional opinion wrapped up in it, and was a little disappointed on discovering only a piece of ordinary bread.

"And what, Mr. Trevor, if I may ask you this—what is the subject of your next picture? Naturally I wish to know exactly all that is going on round me. That is the only way, is it not, of being able to trace the tendencies of Art? Historical, romantic, realistic—what?"

"I've just begun a portrait of myself," said Frank.

Mrs. Greenock laid down the spoonful of soup she was raising to her lips, as if the mental food she was receiving was more suited to supply her needs than *potage à la bonne femme.*

"Thank you so much," she ejaculated. "Algernon dear, Mr. Trevor is doing a portrait of himself. Remind me to tell Harry that as soon as we get home. Ah, what a revelation it will be! An artist's portrait of himself — the portrait of you by yourself. That is the only true way for artists to teach us, to show us theirselves—what they are, not only what they look like."

Frank crumbled his bread with subdued violence.

"You have hit the nail on the head," he replied. "That is exactly what I mean to do."

Mrs. Greenock was delighted. This was a sort of testimonial to the superior-

ity of her intellect, written in the hand of a professional.

"Please tell me more," she said, rejecting an *entrée*.

"There is nothing to tell," he said; "you have got to the root of the matter. A portrait should be, as you say, the man himself, not what he looks like. We are often very different to what we look like, and a gallery of real portraits would be a very startling thing. So many portraits are merely colored photographs. My endeavor is that this shall be something more than that."

"Yes!" said Mrs. Greenock, eagerly.

"You shall see it if you wish," said Frank, "but it will not be finished for a couple of days yet. My wife goes away to-morrow for a night, and as I shall be alone I shall work very hard at it. It—"

Frank was speaking in his lowest

audible tones, but he stopped suddenly. He was afraid for a moment that he would actually lose all control over himself. As he spoke all his strange dreams and fancies surged back over his mind, and he could hardly prevent himself from crying aloud. He looked up and caught Margery's eye, and she, seeing that something was wrong, referred a point which she or Mr. Greenock had been discussing to his wife. Meantime Frank pulled himself together, but registered a solemn vow that never till the crack of doom should Mrs. Greenock set foot in his house again. He and Margery had had a small tussle over the necessity of asking the vicar to dinner, but Margery had insisted that every one always asked the vicar to dine, and Frank, of weaker will than she, had acquiesced. Poor Mrs. Greenock had unconsciously launched herself on very

thin ice, and Frank inwardly absolved himself from all responsibility if she tried the experiment again.

When the two ladies left the room Mr. Greenock's feather-bed descents began in earnest. It was trying, but he was less likely to go in dangerous places than his predatory wife. He would not drink any more wine, and he would not smoke; but when Frank proposed that they should join the ladies, he said:

"It so seldom happens, in this secluded corner of the world, that I can converse with men who have lived their lives in a sphere so different to mine, that I confess I should much enjoy a little longer talk with you."

"Yes, I suppose you get few visitors here," said Frank.

"The visitors we get here," said Mr. Greenock, "are chiefly tourists who are not inclined for an interchange of

thought and experience. Sometimes I see them in our little church-yard where so many men of note are buried, but they do not stop. Indeed, it would indicate a morbid tendency if they did."

"I have often noticed how many names one knows are on the graves in your church-yard," said Frank.

"It is a solemn thought," said Mr. Greenock, "that in our little church-yard lies all that is mortal of so many brilliant intellects and exceptional abilities. 'Green grows the grass on their graves,' as my wife beautifully expressed it the other day in a little lyric."

"Dear me, I did not know that Mrs. Greenock wrote poetry," said Frank.

"She is a sonneteer of considerable power," said the vicar.

Frank, who had always thought of Mrs. Greenock in the light of a Puritan rather than a sonneteer, gave a sudden

choke of laughter. But Mr. Greenock was arranging his next sentence and did not hear it.

"Her verses are always distinguished by their thoughtfully chosen similes," he continued, "and their flow of harmonious language."

"You can hardly feel out of the world if you always have a poet by you."

"The career of a poet," said Mr. Greenock, "is always beset with snares and difficulties. On the one hand, there is the danger of a too easily gained popularity, and, on the other, the discouraging effect of the absence of an audience."

"I am sure I can guess to which danger Mrs. Greenock is most exposed," said Frank, rather wildly.

"You are pleased to say so," said the vicar, with an appreciative wave of his

hand. "In point of fact, some verses of hers which have appeared from time to time in a local paper have attracted much not unmerited attention. She is preparing a small volume of verse-idyls for publication."

Mr. Greenock rose, as if further interchange of thought and experience could not but be bathos after this, and Frank and he joined the ladies.

Mrs. Greenock was seized with sensitiveness when she heard that Frank had learned about the forthcoming verse-idyls, but soon recovered sufficiently to make some very true though not very original remarks on the beauty of the moonlit sea, and pressed Frank to tell her whether any one had ever painted a moonlit scene. Frank cast a glance of concentrated hatred at the unoffending moon, and proceeded to answer.

"In this imperfect world," he said,

"it would surely be too much to expect that we can convince any one else. It is sufficient if we can convince ourselves. What on earth does the opinion of the foolish crowd matter to an artist? Their praise is almost more distasteful than their censure. Have you ever seen a critic? I met one once at dinner, and—God forgive him, for I cannot—he admired my pictures. He admired them all, and he admired them for the wrong reasons. He admired just that which was intelligible to him. He added insult to injury by praising them in one of those penny-in-the-slot journals, as some one says. No man has a right to criticise a picture unless he knows more about Art than the man who painted it. Carry conviction to any one else? Wait till the day when your poems seem ugly to you, when all you write seems commonplace and trivial; you will not care about

convincing other people then. You will say, 'It is enough if I can write a line which seems to me only not execrable.' Extremes meet, and contentment comes only to those who know nothing or who nearly know all."

Mrs. Greenock stared at him in amazement. This was not at all her idea of the cultured, refined artist, the man who would say pretty things in beautiful language, and ask to borrow the *Penalva Gazette* which contained her poem on "A Corner in a Country Church-yard." She drew on her gloves as if to shield herself from a blustering wind.

Frank, I am sorry to say, felt an evil pleasure in the shock he had given her. He had spoken without malice aforethought, but the malice certainly came in when he had finished speaking. What right had this verse-idyl woman

to tell him what a portrait should be, to speak to him of that which he hardly dared think of himself, and drag his nightmare out on to the table-cloth?

His voice rose a tone as he went on.

"You call one thing pretty, another ugly," he said. "Believe me, Art knows no such terms. A thing is true or it is false, and the cruelty of it is that if we have as much as a grain of falsehood in our whole sense of truth, the thing is worthless. Therefore, in this picture I am doing I have tried to be absolutely truthful; as you said at dinner, I have tried to paint what I am without extenuation or concealment. Would you like to see it? You would probably call it a hideous caricature, because in this terribly cruel human life no man knows what is good in him, but only what is bad. It is those who love us only who know if there is any good in us—"

His voice sank again, and as his eye rested on Margery the hardness softened from his face and it was transformed.

"Dear me, I have been talking a lot of shop, I am afraid," he said; 'but I have the privilege or the misfortune—I hardly know which—to be terribly in earnest, and I have committed the unpardonable breach of manners to make you the unwilling recipient of my earnestness. Ah, Margery is going to sing to us."

Poor Mrs. Greenock felt as if she had asked for a little bread and been pelted with quartern loaves. She felt almost too sore and knocked about to eat it herself, much less to put pieces in her pocket for Tom and Harry and Jane. But the fact that Margery was singing made it natural for her to be silent, and she finished putting on

her gloves, and, so to speak, tidied herself up again. In fact, before they left she had recovered enough to be able to thank Frank for the extremely interesting conversation they had had, and to remind him of his promise to show her the picture.

"I will send you a note when it is done," said he. "Margery is going away to-morrow for the inside of two days, and I expect it will be finished in three or four days at the most."

CHAPTER VI

Margery left early next morning, since, by the ingenious and tortuous route pursued by the Cornish lines, it was a day's journey from Penalva to the Lizard. Frank drove with her to the station, and promised to do as he was told, and not work more than seven hours a day and not less than four. He had quite recovered his equanimity, and spoke of the portrait without fear or despair. But when they got in sight of the station, and again when a puff of white steam and a thin, shrill whistle came to them as they stood on the platform, through the blue-white morning mist, a terror came and looked him in

the face, and he clung to Margery like a frightened child.

"Margery, you will come back to-morrow, won't you?" he said. "Ah, need you go at all?"

Margery was disappointed. She had thought that Frank had got over his fantastic fears, he had been so like himself during the drive. But she was absolutely determined to go through with this. To yield once was to yield twice, and she would not yield. Frank must be cured of this sort of thing, and the only way to cure him was to make him do what he feared—to make him give himself absolute final evidence that personalities did not vanish away before portraits like ghosts at daybreak. But, as a matter of fact, Frank's fear was the fear he had not spoken to her of. The danger of losing her swallowed up the danger of losing himself.

"Oh, Frank, don't be a fool!" she said. "Here's the train. Have you had my bag labelled? Of course I shall be back to-morrow. Good-bye, old boy!"

And with another whistle and puff of steam the train was off.

Frank drove home again like a man possessed. Margery had gone, and there remained to him only one thing, and until he was with that time ran to waste. The horses, freshened by the cool, clean air, flew over the hard road, but Frank still urged them on. As soon as they drew up by the door Frank jumped down, leaving the reins on their backs, and went to his studio. There in the corner stood his worst self, and he set to work in earnest. To-day there was no waiting, no puzzling over an idea he could not realize. The evil face smiled as it looked at the yellow little pro-

gramme, and the long-fingered hands smoothed out its creases with a lingering, loving touch. Desire and the fulfilment of desire were there, and into the soul had the leanness of it entered. And because, as he had said, no man knows the best of himself, but only the worst, there was but little trace in the face of the man who had loved Margery and whom Margery had loved; yet in the eyes was the trace of what had been lost, and if not regret, at least the longing to be able to regret. The better part was not wholly dead, though half smothered under the weight of evil. As he painted he began to realize that it would be so. Had Margery been there, he felt the better part would have been recorded too; but the devil is a highwayman who waits for men who are alone, and he is stronger than a solitary man, though he be St. Anthony himself. But

Margery was away, and her absence was almost as the draught that transformed Jekyll into Hyde. So for those two days he worked alone, as he had never worked before, but as he has often worked since, utterly absorbed in his painting, and eating ravenously, but for a few moments only, when his food was brought to him. As the hours went on the conviction came over him that he was right both about the strange fear he had spoken of to Margery and about the other fear of which he had spoken to none. His conscious self seemed to be passing into the portrait, and one by one, like drops of bitter water, his past life flowed higher and higher round him. Far off he thought he could see Margery, but she gave no sign. She did not beckon to him to come, she was not alive to the danger of the rising waters. Soon it would be too late.

The first evening, after the daylight had fallen and he could no longer paint, he threw himself down on the sofa. The work of the last few days stood opposite him, and the red glow of the sunset, not yet quite faded from the sky, still made it clearly visible, though the value of the colors was lost. Frank felt like a man who, after a long, sleepless night of pain, feels that if only he could forget everything for a moment he might doze off into a slumber that would take an hour or two out of life. But the pain, as it were, stood before him, mastering him.

It may only have been that his nerves, abnormally excited after the strain of working, played him false; but it seemed to him that, in spite of the fading light, the portrait was as clear as ever; and as he was sitting wondering at this, half encouraging himself to believe it, he was suddenly aware that the figure he

had painted cast a shadow on to the background which he had never put there. As he had painted it, the shadow fell on the left side of the face, but now it seemed that the shadow was on the right side of the face, exactly as it would naturally be cast by the light coming from the window. At that moment he knew what fear was—cold fear that clutches at the heart—and he sat there a moment unable to move, almost expecting to hear it speak to him. Then, with an effort of will so strong that it seemed like a straining of the body, he walked up to it, turned it round to the wall, and left the room.

That night he had an odd dream, the result again of the excitement of the day, but so strangely natural that he hardly knew next morning whether it had happened or not. He dreamed he went back to the studio, finding everything

exactly as he had left it—the portrait turned with its face to the wall, and his brushes and palette where he had laid them down when it had become too dark to paint. The servants had brought in lights, and had laid the day's paper on the table. He was conscious of utter weariness of mind and body, and he longed for Margery, but knew that she was away. The yellow programme of the Café Chantant lay on a shelf of the bookcase, where he had put it in the leaves of *Jekyll and Hyde*, and he took the two down together, as he had done a few days before, and mechanically his mind again retraced the life it had before suggested to him. Suddenly an utter loathing of it all, more complete than he had ever felt, came over him, and he tried to tear the programme up. But it seemed to be made of a thin sheet of some hard substance, and it

would not tear. Then he tried to crush it under his foot, but it would not even bend. The bitter, unimaginable agony of not being able to destroy it awoke him, and he found morning had come.

All that day he worked, and once again as evening fell he sat on the sofa, staring blankly at what he had done. Once again the shadow shifted on the painted face, and fell where the light from the window would naturally cast it, and once again cold fear clutched at his heart. At that moment he heard steps along the passage, steps which he knew, and Margery entered.

"Frank," she said, opening the door, "are you there?"

A long figure sprang off the sofa and ran across the room to her, half smothering her in caresses.

"Oh, Margery, I'm so glad you've come," he said — "so glad. You don't

know what it has been without you. Margery, promise you won't go away again till it is finished. You won't go away again, will you?"

Margery shuddered and drew back a moment, she hardly knew why.

"Why, Frank, what's the matter?" she asked. "Have you seen a ghost—or what?"

"The place is full of ghosts," said he. "But they won't trouble me any more now you've come back. Let's go out, away from here."

"But I want to see the portrait first," said she.

"Ah, the portrait!"

Frank took two quick steps to where it was standing, and wheeled it round with its face to the wall.

"Not to-night," he said. "Please don't look at it to-night. You can't see it by this light."

"I know I can't," said she, "but I only wanted to peep at it to see if it had got on."

"It has got on," said Frank, "it has got on wonderfully. But don't look at it to-night. It is terrible after sunset."

Margery raised her eyebrows.

"Oh, don't be so silly," she said. "However, I don't mind waiting till to-morrow. Is it good?"

"Come out of this place, and I'll tell you about it."

Outside the west was still luminous with the sunken sun, and as they stepped out on to the terrace Margery turned to look at Frank. His face seemed terribly tired and anxious, and there were deep shades beneath his eyes. But again, as a few moments before in the shadow, she involuntarily shrank from him. There was something in his

face more than what mere weariness and anxiety would produce—something she had seen in the face he had sketched two days ago, and the something she knew she had shrunk from before, though she had not seen it. But in a moment she pulled herself together; if she were going to go in for fantastic fears too, the allowance of sanity between them would not be enough for daily consumption. Frank, however, noticed it at once.

"Ah, you too," he said, bitterly—"even you desert me."

Margery took hold of his arm.

"Don't talk sheer, silly nonsense," she said. "I don't know what you mean. I know what's the matter with you. You've been working all day and not going out."

"Yes, I know I have. I couldn't help it. But never mind that now. I

have got you back. Margery, you don't give me up really, do you?"

"Frank, what do you mean?" she asked.

"I — I mean — I mean nothing. I don't know what I am saying. I've been working too hard, and I have got dazed and stupid."

He turned to look at the blaze on the waters to the west.

"Ah, how beautiful it is!" he exclaimed. "I wish I were a landscape-painter. But you are more beautiful, Margery. But it is safer to be a landscape-painter, so much safer!"

Margery stopped and faced him.

"Now, Frank, tell me the truth. Have you been out since I left you yesterday morning?"

"No."

"How long have you been working each day?"

"I don't know. I didn't look at my watch. All day, I suppose; and the days are long — terribly long — and the nights too. The nights are even longer, but one can't work then."

Margery was frightened, and, being frightened, she got angry with herself and him.

"Oh, you really are too annoying," she said, with a stamp of her foot. "You get yourself into bad health by overworking and not taking any exercise — you've got the family liver, you know — and then you tell me the house is full of ghosts, and conjure up all sorts of absurd fancies about losing your personality, frightening yourself and me. Frank, it's too bad!"

Frank looked up suddenly at her.

"You too? Are you frightened too? God help me if you are frightened too!"

"No, I'm not frightened," said Margery, "but I'm angry and ashamed of you. You're no better than a silly child."

"Margery," said he, in his lowest audible tone, "I'll never touch the picture again if you wish. Tell me to destroy it and I will, and we'll go for a holiday together. I—I want a holiday; I've been working too hard. Or it would be better if you went in very quietly and cut it up. I don't want to go near it. It doesn't like me. Tell me to destroy it."

"No, no!" cried Margery, "that's the very thing I will not do. And fancy saying you want a holiday! You've just had two months' holiday. But that's no reason why you should work like a lunatic. Of course any one can go mad if they like—it's only a question of whether you think you are going to."

"Margery, tell me truthfully," said Frank, "do you think I am going mad?"

"Of course I don't. I only think you are very, very silly. But I've known that ever since I knew you at all. It's a great pity."

They strolled up and down for a few moments in silence. The magic of Margery's presence was beginning to work on Frank, and after a little space of silence he laughed to himself almost naturally.

"Margery, you are doing me good," he said. "I've been terribly lonely without you."

"And terribly silly, it appears."

"Perhaps I have. Anyhow, I like to hear you tell me so. I should like to think I had been silly, but I don't know."

"I'm afraid if you've been silly the

portrait will be silly too," said she. "Is it silly, Frank?"

"It's wonderful," said he, suddenly stopping short. "It is not only like me, but it's me—at least, if you will stop with me while I work it will be all me. I shall feel safer if you are there."

"Then I won't be there," said Margery. "You are not a child any longer, and you must work alone. You always say you can't work if any one else is there."

"Well, I don't suppose it matters," said Frank, with returning confidence. "The fact that I know you are in the house will be enough. But the portrait—it's wonderful! I can't think why I loathe it so."

"You loathe it because you have been working at it in a ridiculous manner," said Margery. "To-morrow I regulate

your day for you. I shall leave you your morning to yourself, and after lunch you shall come out with me for two hours at least. We will go up some of those little creeks where we went two years ago. Come in now. It's nearly dinner-time."

When they were alone and a portrait was in progress they often sat in the studio after dinner; but to-night, when Margery proposed it, Frank started up from where he was sitting.

"No, Margery," he said, "please let us sit here. I don't want to go to the studio at all."

"It's the scene of your crime," said Margery.

Frank turned pale.

"What crime?" he asked. "What do you know of my crimes?"

Margery put down the paper she was reading and burst out laughing.

"You really are too ridiculous," she said. "Are you and I going to play the second act of a melodrama? Your crime of working all day and taking no exercise."

"Oh, I see," said Frank. "Well, don't let us visit the scene of my crimes to-night."

Margery had determined that, whatever Frank did, she would behave quite naturally, and not allow herself to indulge even in disturbing thoughts. So she laughed again, and wiped off Frank's remark from her mind.

Otherwise his behavior that evening was quite reassuring. Often when he was painting he had an aversion to being left alone in the intervals, and though this perhaps was more marked than usual, Margery did not allow it to disquiet her. The painting of a portrait was always rather a trying time, though

Frank's explanation of this did not seem to her in the least satisfactory.

"When one paints," he had said to her once, "one is much more exposed to other influences. One's soul, so to speak, is on the surface, and I want some one near me who will keep an eye on it, and I feel safe if I have your eye on me, Margery. You know, when religious people have been to church or to a revivalist meeting, they are much more susceptible to what they see, whether it is sin or sanctity; that is just because their souls have come to the surface. It is very unwise to go to see a lot of strange people when you are in that state. No one knows what influence they may have on you. But I know what influence you have on me."

"I wish my influence would make you a little less silly," she had replied.

Margery went to bed quite happy in her mind, except on one point. She had been gifted by nature with a superb serenity which it took much blustering wind to ruffle, and in the main Frank's behavior was different, not in kind, but only in degree, from what she had seen before when he was painting. He always got nervous and excited over a picture which he really gave himself up to; he always talked ridiculous nonsense about personalities and influences, and though his childlike desire to be with her when he was not working was more accentuated than usual, she drew the very natural conclusion that he was more absorbed than usual in his work.

But there was one point which troubled her: she had quite unaccountably shrunk from him when he ran to meet her across the studio, and she had shrunk

from him again when she saw his face. She told herself that this was her own silliness, not his, and that it was ridiculous of her to try to cure Frank of his absurdities while she was so absurd herself. She had shrunk back involuntarily, as if from an evil thing.

"How absurd and ridiculous of me," she said to herself, as she settled herself in bed. "Frank is Frank, and it is his idea that he is ceasing or will cease to be Frank which I have thought all along is so supremely silly, and which I think supremely silly still. Yet I shrank from him as I would from a man who had committed a crime."

Then suddenly another thought came to join this one in her brain: "What crimes? What do you know of my crimes?"

The contact and the electric spark had been instantaneous, for she wrenched

the two thoughts apart. But they had come together, and between them they had generated a spark of light.

And so, without knowing it, she knew for a moment what was Frank's secret which he dared not tell her.

CHAPTER VII

Frank got up, as his custom was, very early next morning, and went straight to the studio; and Margery, keeping to the resolve of the night before, left him alone all morning. She had sent his breakfast in to him, but ate hers alone in her morning-room.

The knowledge that she was with him had had a quieting effect on Frank, and he had slept deep and dreamlessly. As he walked along the passage to his studio he felt that he hardly feared what he would find there. How could the ghost of what was dead in him have any chance, so to speak, against the near, living reality of Margery and

Margery's love? Was not good more powerful than evil? But when he entered the studio and had wheeled the portrait back into its place, the supremacy of one side of his nature over the other was reversed instantaneously—almost without consciousness of transition. The power which the thing his hands had been working out for the last few days had acquired was becoming overwhelming. When Margery was with him, actually with him, she still held up his better part; but when he was alone with this, all that was good sank like lead in an unplumbed sea. He was like some heathen who makes with his own hands an idol of stone or wood, and then bows down before that which he himself made, believing that it is lord over him.

All morning Margery successfully fought against her inclination to go to Frank, for she was clear in her own

mind that he had to work out his salvation alone. He was afraid of being alone, and the only way to teach him not to be afraid was to let him learn in solitude that there was nothing to be afraid of. So she yawned an hour away over a two-volume novel by a popular author, wrote a letter to her mother, ordered dinner, and tried to think she was very busy. But it was with a certain sense of relief that she heard the clock strike one, and, shutting up her book, she went to the studio.

Frank was standing with his back to the door, and did not look up from his work when she entered. She came up behind him and saw what he had wished her not to see the night before, and understood why. He always worked rapidly though never hurriedly, and she knew at once what the finished picture

would be like. The "idea" was recorded.

She gave a sudden start and a little cry as sharp and involuntary as the cry of physical pain, for the meaning of the first rough sketch which had puzzled her was now worked out, and she saw before her the face of a guilty man. She shrank and shuddered as she had shrunk when her husband ran to meet her across the studio the night before, and as she had shrunk from him when she saw his face, for the face that looked out from that canvas was the same as her husband's face which had so startled and repelled her. It was the face of a man who has wilfully stifled certain nobler impulses for the sake of something wicked, and who was stifling them still. It was the face of a man who has fallen, and when she turned to look at Frank she saw

that he had in the portrait seized on something that stared from every line of his features.

"Ah, Frank," she cried, "but what has happened? It is horrible, and you —you are horrible, too!"

Frank did not seem to hear, for he went on painting; but she heard him murmur below his breath:

"Yes, horrible, horrible!"

For the moment Margery lost her nerve completely. She was incontrollably frightened.

"Frank, Frank!" she cried, hysterically.

Then she cursed her own folly. That was not the way to teach him. She laid one hand on his arm, and with her voice again in control, "Leave off painting," she said — "leave off painting at once and look at me!"

This time he heard. His right

hand, holding a brush filled with paint, dropped nervelessly to his side, and the brush slid from his fingers on to the floor.

In that moment his face changed. The vicious, guilty lines softened and faded, and his expression became that of a frightened child.

"Ah, Margery," he cried, "what has happened? Why were you not here? What have I been doing?"

Margery had got between him and the picture, and before he had finished speaking she had wheeled it round with its face to the wall.

"You've been working long enough," she said, "and you are coming out for a bit."

"Yes, that will be nice," said Frank, picking up the brush he had dropped and examining it. "Why, it is quite full of paint," he added, as if this re-

markable discovery was quite worth comment.

"You dear, how extraordinary!" said Margery. "You usually paint with dry brushes, don't you?"

"Oh, I've been painting all morning, so I have!" said Frank, in the same listless, tired voice, and his eye wandered to the easel which Margery had turned round.

"No, you've got to let it alone," said she, guessing his intention. "You are not going to work any more till this afternoon."

Frank passed his hands over his eyes.

"I'm rather tired," he said. "I think I won't go for a walk. I'll sit down here if you will stop with me."

"Very good, for ten minutes; and then you must come out. It's a lovely morning, and we'll only stroll."

Frank looked out of the window.

"My God! it is a lovely morning," he said—"it is insolently lovely. I've been dreaming, I think. Those trees look as if they were dreaming, too. I wonder if they have such horrible dreams as I? I think I must have been asleep. I feel queer and only half awake, and I've had bad dreams—horrid dreams."

"Did he have nasty dreams?" said she, sympathetically. "He said he was going to work so hard, and he's dreamed instead."

Frank seemed hardly to hear her.

"It began by my wondering whether I ought to go on with that portrait or not," he said. "I kept thinking—"

"You shall go on with it, Frank," broke in Margery, suddenly, afraid of letting herself consent—"I tell you that you must go on with it."

Frank roused himself at the sound of her eager voice.

"You don't understand," he said. "I know that I am running a certain risk if I do. I told you about one of those risks I was running, didn't I? It was that, partly, I was drawing about all morning. I thought I was in danger all the time. I was running the risk of losing myself, or becoming something quite different to what I am. I ran the risk of losing you, myself—all I care for, except my Art."

"And with a big 'A,' dear?" asked Margery.

"With the very biggest 'A,' and all scarlet."

"The *Scarlet Letter*," said Margery, triumphantly, "which you were reading last week? That accounts for *that* symptom. Go on and be more explicit!"

"I know you think it is all absurd,"

said Frank, "but I am a better judge than you. I know myself better than you know me—better, please God, than you will ever know me. However, you won't understand that. But with regard to what I told you: when I paint a picture, you think the net result is I and a picture, instead of I alone. But you are wrong. There is only I just as before; and inasmuch as there is a picture, there is less of myself here in my clothes."

"A picture is oil-paint," said Margery, "and you buy that at shops."

"Yes, and brushes too," said Frank; "but a picture is not only oil-paint and brushes."

"Go on," said Margery.

"Well, have I got any right to do it? In other pictures it has not mattered because one recuperates by degrees, and one does not put all one's

self into them. But painting this I feel differently. I am going into it, slowly but inevitably. I shall put all I am into it—at least, all I know of while I am painting; and what will happen to this thing here" (he pointed to himself) "I can't say. All the time I was painting, that thought with others was with me, as if it had been written in fire on my brain. Have I got any business to run risks which I can't estimate? I know I have a certain duty to perform to you and others, and is it right for me to risk all that for a painted thing?"

He stood up.

"Margery," he said, "that is not all. Shall I tell you the rest? There is another risk I run much more important, and much more terrible. May I tell you?"

"No, you may not," said Margery,

decidedly. "It simply makes these fantastic fears more real to you to speak of them. You shall not tell me. And now we are going out. But I have one thing to tell you. Listen to me, Frank," she said, standing up and facing him. "As you said just now, you know nothing of the risk you run. All you do know is that it is in your power, as you believe, and as I believe, to do something really good if you go on with that picture. I don't say that I shall like it, but it may be a splendid piece of work without that. Are you an artist, or a silly child, frightened of ghosts? I want you to finish it because I think it may teach you that you have a large number of silly ideas in your head, and when you see that none of them are fulfilled it may help you to get rid of them — in fact, I believe I want you to finish it for the

same reason for which you are afraid to finish it. You say you will lose your personality, or some of your personality. I say you will get rid of a great many silly ideas. If you lose that part of your personality I shall be delighted—in fact, it is the best thing that could happen to you. As for your other fears, I don't know what they are, and I don't want to know. To speak of them encourages you to believe in them. There! Now you've worked enough for the present, and we'll go for a stroll till lunch; and after lunch we'll go out again, and you can work for another hour or two before it gets dark."

It required all Margery's resolution and self-control to get through this speech. It was not a pretty thing that had looked out at her from the easel, and the look she had seen twice on Frank's face, and felt once, was not

pretty either. That his work had a very definite and startling effect on him she knew from personal experience, but that anything could happen to him she entirely declined to believe. He was cross, irritable, odious, as she often told him, when he was interested in his work, but when it was over he became calm, unruffled, and delightful again. She was fully determined he should do this portrait, and to himself she allowed that it would be a relief when it was finished.

Frank got up at once with unusual docility. As a rule, he scowled and snarled when she fetched him away from his work, and made himself generally disagreeable. This uncommon state of things gave Margery great surprise.

"Well, why don't you say you'll be blessed if you come?" she asked, moving towards the door.

"Ah, I'm quite willing to come," he said. "Why shouldn't I come? I always would come anywhere with you."

He followed her towards the door, and in passing suddenly caught sight of the easel. He looked round like a child afraid of being detected in doing something it ought not, and before Margery could stop him he had taken two quick steps towards it and turned it round. In a moment his mood changed.

"Do you see that?" he said in a whisper, as if the thing would overhear him. "That's what I was all the morning when you were not here, and I knew I oughtn't to be painting. Wait a minute, Margy; I want to finish a bit I was working at!"

His face grew suddenly pale, and the look of guilt descended on it like a mist, blotting out the features.

"That's what you are making of me," he said. "Give me my palette. Quick! I sha'n't be a minute."

But Margery caught up, as she had often done before, his palette and brushes from the table where he had left them, and fled with them to the door.

"Give them to me at once!" shouted Frank, holding out his hand for them, but still looking at the picture.

Margery gave one long-drawn breath of pain and horror when she looked at Frank's face, and then, a blessed sense of humor coming to her aid, she broke out into a light laugh — half hysterical and half amused.

"Oh, Frank," she cried, "you look exactly like Irving in 'Macbeth' when he says, 'This is a sorry sight! I never saw a sorrier.'"

At the sound of her voice, more particularly at the sound of her laugh, he

turned and looked at her, and the horror faded from his face.

"What have I been saying?" he asked.

"You said, 'Give me the daggers!' —oh no, Lady Macbeth says that. Well, here they are. Come to me, Frank, and I'll give you them."

Frank walked obediently up to her, as she stood in the entrance to the passage, and as soon as he was outside the studio she banged the door and stood in front of it triumphantly.

"Here are the daggers," she said, "but you are not going to use them now. You shall finish that picture, but not like a madman. And if you look like Macbeth any more I shall simply die of it; or I shall behave like Lady Macbeth, and then there will be a pair of us. I shall walk in my sleep down to the sea, and wash my hands all day till it gets quite red. Now you're coming out. March!"

CHAPTER VIII

After lunch Frank and Margery went down to the river and cruised about in a little boat, exploring, as they had explored a hundred times before, the unexpected but well-known little creeks which ran up between the hummocks of the broad-backed hills, shut in and shadowed by delicate-leaved beech-trees. When the tide was high it was possible to get some way up into these wooded retreats, and by remaining very still, or going quickly and silently round a corner, you might sometimes catch sight of a kingfisher flashing up from the shallows and darting along the lane of flecked sunlight like a jewel

flung through the air. There had been a frost, the first of the year, the night before, and the broad-leaved docks and hemlocks lining the banks had still drops of moisture on their leaves like pearls or moon-stones *semées* on to green velvet. The woods had taken a deeper autumnal tint in the last two days, and already the five-ribbed chestnut leaves, the first of all to fall, were lying scattered on the ground. Every now and then a rabbit scuttled away to seek the protection of thicker undergrowth, or a young cock pheasant, as yet unmolested, stood and looked at the intruders.

Margery was surprised to find how great the relief of getting Frank away from his picture was. The horrible guilty look on the portrait's face, and, more than that, the knowledge that it was a terribly true realization of her

husband's expression, disturbed her more than she liked to admit even to herself.

But nothing, she determined—not if all the ghosts out of the *Decameron* sat in her husband's eyes—should make her abandon her resolution of compelling Frank to finish it. She did not believe in occult phenomena of this description; no painting of any portrait could alter the painter's nature. To get tired and anxious was not the same as losing your personality; the first, if one was working well and hard, was inevitable; the second was impossible, it was nonsense. Decidedly she did not believe in the possibility of his losing his personality. But with all her resolutions to the contrary, she could not help wondering what the other fear, which she had forbidden him to tell her, was. Vaguely in her own mind she connected

it with that strange shudder she had felt when she saw him the night before; and quite irrelevantly, as it seemed to her, the image came into her mind of something hidden rising to the surface —of the sea giving up its dead. . . .

It was on this point alone she distrusted herself and all the resolutions she had made. She did not yet know clearly what she feared, but she realized dimly that there was a possibility of its becoming clearer to her, and that when it became clearer she would have to decide afresh. At present her one desire was that he should finish the portrait, and finish it as quickly as possible. But at any rate she had Frank with her now, as she had known him and loved him all their life together. That love she would not risk, but at present she did not see where the risk could come in. With her, and away from the por-

trait, he was again completely himself. He looked tired and was rather silent, and often when she turned from her place in the bow (where she was looking for concealed snags or roots in the water) to him, as he punted the boat quietly along with an oar, for the stream was narrow to row in, she saw him standing still, oar in hand, looking at her, and when their eyes met he smiled.

"It is like that first afternoon we were here, Margy, isn't it?" he said on one of these occasions. "Do you remember? We got here on a September morning, after travelling all night from London, and after lunch we came up this very creek."

"Yes, Frank, and I feel just as I did then."

"What did you feel?"

"Why—why, that I had got you all

to myself at last, and that I did not care about anything else."

"Ah, my God!" cried Frank, suddenly.

"What is it?" asked she.

Frank ran the boat into a little hollow made in the side of the creek by a small stream, now nearly summer dry, and came and sat down on the bank just above her.

"Margy dear," he said, "I want to ask you something quite soberly. I am not excited nor overwrought in any way, am I? I am quite calm and sensible. It is not as if that horrible thing were with us. It is about that I want to talk to you—about the picture. All this morning, as I told you, I knew I ought not to go on with it, but I went on because it had a terrible evil fascination for me. And now, too, I know I ought not to go on with it. It is wicked. This morn-

ing I thought of that afternoon we spent here before, and I knew I was sacrificing that. Then I did not care, but now you are all the world to me, as you always have been except when I am with that thing. It was that first day we came here to this very spot that was fixed in my mind. And now we are here in the same place, and on just such another day, let us talk about it."

"Oh, Frank, don't be a coward," said Margery, appealingly. "You know exactly what I think about it. Of course all my inclination goes with you, but, but—"

She raised herself from the boat and put her hand on his knee.

"Frank, you don't doubt me, do you? There is nothing in the world I could weigh against you and your love, but we must be reasonable. If you had a very strong presentiment that you would be drowned as we sailed home I should

very likely be dreadfully uncomfortable, but I wouldn't have you walk back instead for anything. There are many things of which we know nothing—presentiments, fears, all the horrors, in fact—and it would be like children to take them into our reckoning or let them direct us. It is for your sake, not mine, that I want you to go on with that portrait. If I followed my inclination I should say, 'Tear it up and let us sit here together for ever and ever.'"

Frank leaned forward and spoke entreatingly.

"Margy, tell me to tear it up—ah, do, dear, and you may do with me whatever you wish — only tell me to destroy it!"

Margery shook her head hopelessly.

"Don't disappoint me, Frank," she said. "I care for nothing in the world compared to you; but what reason

could I give for doing this? I think you often get excited and upset over your work, but that is worth while, because you do good work and you are not permanently upset. You wouldn't give up being an artist for that. And if I saw any reason for telling you to stop this, I would do it. It is because I care for you and all your possibilities that I tell you to go on with it."

Margery thought for a moment of the portrait and the terrible likeness it bore to her husband, and she hesitated. But no; the whole thing was too fantastic, too vague. She did not even know what she was afraid of.

"It isn't the pleasant or the easy course I am taking," she continued. "That wasn't a pleasant look on your face when you shouted at me to give you your palette this morning?"

Frank looked puzzled.

"What did I do?" he asked. "When did I shout at you?"

"This morning, just before we came out. You shouted awfully loud, and you looked like Macbeth. It is just because I don't want you to look like Macbeth permanently that I insist on your going on with it. I want you to get Macbeth out of your system. That fantastic idea of yours, that you would run a risk, was the original cause of all this nonsense, and when you have finished the picture and seen that you have run no risk, you will know that I am right."

Frank stood up.

"To-morrow may be too late," he said. "Do you really tell me to go on with it?"

"Frank, dear, don't be melodramatic. You were just as nice as you could be all the way up here. Yes, I tell you to go on with it."

Frank's arms dropped by his side, and for a moment he stood quite still. The leaves whispered in the trees, and the rippling stream tapped against the boat. Then for a moment the breeze dropped, and the boat swung round with the current. The water made no sound against it as it moved slowly round, and there was silence — tense, absolute silence.

Then Margery lay back in the boat and laughed. Her laugh sounded strange in her own ears.

"I am sure this is one of the occasions on which we ought to hear only the beating of our own hearts; but, as a matter of fact, I don't. Come, Frank, don't stand there like a hop-pole."

Frank slowly let his eyes rest on her, but he did not answer her smile.

Margery paused a moment.

"Come," she said again, "let us go

a little higher. There is plenty of water."

Frank pushed the boat out from the bank and jumped in.

"Then it is all over," he said. "I must go home at once. I must get on with the portrait immediately. I cannot last if I am not quick. There's no time to lose, Margy. Please let me get back at once."

He paused a moment.

"Margy, give me one kiss, will you?" he said. "Perhaps, perhaps — Ah, my darling, cannot you do what I ask?"

He had raised himself and clung round her neck, kissing her again and again. But she, afraid of yielding, afraid of sacrificing her reason even to that she loved best in the world, unwound his arms.

"No, Frank, I have said I cannot.

Oh, my dear, don't you understand? Frank, Frank!"

But he shook his head and took up the oar.

"Why are you in such a hurry?" she asked, after a moment, seeing he did not look at her again. "What time is it?"

"I don't know," said Frank, quickly. "I only know that if I am to finish it I must finish it at once. It will take us nearly an hour to get home, and it is too dark to work after five."

The wind, since that sudden lull, had blown only fitfully by gusts, and by the time they had emerged into the estuary it had died out altogether.

"The wind has dropped," said he. "The winds and the stars fight against me. We sha'n't be able to sail."

He took up the sculls, and rowed as if he were rowing a race.

"What's the matter?" asked Margery. "Why are you in such a hurry? It is not late."

"You don't understand," he said. "There is a hurry. I must get back. Oh, why can't you understand? I must have you or it, and you — you have given me up."

"Frank, what do you mean?" asked Margery, bewilderedly.

"You have given me up for it—it, that painted horror you saw, that—that— Margery, do listen to me just once more. You don't understand, dear, but I don't mind that. Only trust me; only tell me to stop painting it—to destroy it!"

He leaned on his oars a moment, waiting for her answer.

"What is the matter with you?" she asked. "Why do you speak to me like that? What nonsense it all is! I can't

advise you to give it up because I think it much better for you that you should go on with it."

He waited for her answer, and then bent to the oars again. The green water hissed by them as the light boat cut through the calm surface. Margery was sitting in the stern managing the rudder, and it required all her nerve to guide the boat among the rocks that stood out from the shallower water. Frank's terrible earnestness troubled her, but it did not shake her resolution. Look at it what way she might, her deliberate conclusion was that it was better he should go on with it. There was no reason—there really was no reason why he should not, and there was every reason why he should. She wondered if he had better see a doctor. That he was in good health two days ago she knew for certain, but the mind

can react upon the body, and his mind was certainly out of sorts. However, she had decided that the best ultimate cure for his mind was to finish the picture, and she determined to let things be.

"When will it be done?" she asked, after a pause.

"To-morrow," said Frank, without stopping rowing, "and the part that is important will be done to-night. Don't come into the studio, please, till it is too dark to paint. I can't paint with you there."

Margery felt a little hurt in her mind. She had meant to sit with him, as he had asked her to that morning. However, it was best to let him have his way, and she said no more.

It was scarcely half an hour after they had left the creek that they came opposite the little iron staircase leading

down to the rocks. The tide was out, and Frank beached the boat on the shingle at the bottom of the rocks, jumped out, and drew it in. His pale face was flushed and dripping with sweat.

"You'd better change before you begin work," said Margery, as he helped her out, "or you'll catch cold."

Frank burst out with a grating, unnatural laugh.

"Change! I should think I am going to change! I wonder if you'll like the change!"

He walked on in front of her, and when he reached the terrace broke into a run. Margery heard the door of the studio bang behind him.

CHAPTER IX

Margery followed Frank more slowly up to the house. She had won her point; she had refused in the face of all her own inclinations and his feelings to tell him to leave the picture unfinished or to destroy it, and having succeeded in that for which she had been so intensely anxious, the reaction followed. Left to herself, she wondered if she had been right; whether she were wise to trust to reason rather than instinct; whether she had not perhaps in some dim, uncomprehended way put Frank in a position of terrible danger. But where or what, in the name of all that is rational, could the danger be? Yet

there rose up before her, as if in answer to her question, the remembrance of Frank's face while he was painting. Could she account for that rationally? She was bound to confess she could not.

It was a great relief to know that it would soon be over. The important part Frank had told her would be done to-day, in an hour or two. In the whole range of human possibilities she could think of nothing which could happen in an hour or two which would justify Frank's fears. He was not well, she thought; but she regarded the finishing of this portrait as a sort of slight surgical operation which would remove the cause of his mental disease from which his bodily indisposition sprang.

For the present she had to get through an hour or two alone, and she busied herself with small, unnecessary duties,

and read more of the small, unnecessary book, by a popular author, which we have referred to before. A little before five the post came in, and among other letters for her was a note from Jack Armitage.

"And how goes the portrait?" he concluded, "and am I to be summoned to see a descent into Bedlam or an ascent into Heaven? Oddly enough, there is an artist here of transcendental tendencies who holds exactly the same views as Frank. He believes in the danger of losing one's personality, but he also believes in the danger of raising ghosts from one's past life if one paints a portrait of one's self. Luckily, Frank feels only the danger of losing his personality, and does not think about the ghost-raising. I am glad for his peace of mind—and, perhaps, for you too—that this is so. To fight two sets of

ghosts simultaneously might well be too much for one woman, even for you!"

Margery laid down the letter, and the voice of reason within her became gradually less insistent, and then died away. Frank had spoken of another danger more terrible than the one he had told her about, and she would not hear him. There had been a look on his face that frightened and horrified her, and she would not think of it. Once on the beach at New Quay he had wished to tell her something, and she would not hear him.

But the thing was impossible. True; but she was afraid. She felt suddenly unable to cope with his fears, now that she had begun to share them. Then Armitage's last words came back to her—"Beach Hotel, New Quay. I will come at once."

Margery felt ashamed of yielding,

but she justified her yielding to herself. The presence of another person in the house would be a good thing. She knew the absolute necessity of keeping her nerves in perfect order, and there is nothing so infectious as disorders of the nerves.

She got her hat and walked straight off to the village in order to send the telegram. She felt as if she did not even wish her own servants to know she was doing it, and preferred to send it herself than giving it to one of them. The sun was already sinking to its setting, but there would be plenty of time to walk down and get back before it was dark. Frank had said that the portrait was terrible after sunset, and though she tried to laugh at the thought, the laugh would not come. Decidedly, Armitage's presence would be a good thing.

It took her a minute or two to send

the telegram satisfactorily, but eventually she wrote: "Nothing is wrong, but please come. Frank is rather trying."

She left the office and walked back quickly up the village, only to run into Mrs. Greenock, at the corner by the vicarage. Though she was anxious to get back, it was impossible not to exchange a few words.

"And how does the portrait get on?" asked that estimable woman. "I had such a deeply interesting conversation with Mr. Trevor about it when we dined at your house. Is it wonderful? Is it a revelation? Does it show us what he is, not only what he looks like?"

"Frank's very much excited about it," said Margery, "which is always a good sign. I think he is satisfied."

"And when will it be finished?" asked Mrs. Greenock. "Your husband

was so good as to tell me I might see it when it was done. I am looking forward to an intellectual as well as an artistic treat."

"It ought to be done to-morrow," said Margery. "He has been working very hard."

"A giant," murmured Mrs. Greenock—"a gigantic personality. Are you walking home? May I not accompany you a little way? I too have been hard at work to-day, and I have come out to get a breath of fresh air, and perhaps an idea or two."

Mrs. Greenock walked with Margery up to the lodge-gates, beguiling the tedium of the way with instructive discourse, and kept her several moments longer there, bidding her observe the exquisite glow in the western sky where the sun had already gone down.

Margery saw with annoyance that

Mrs. Greenock had been quite right—the sun had already set, and the twilight was falling in darker and darker layers over the earth when she reached the house. She went quickly up the passage leading to the studio and opened the door.

Frank was standing on the other side of the room, with his face turned towards her, a piece of crumpled paper in his hands. The shadow cast from the window fell on the right side of his face, but in the dim light she could see that there was that expression of guilt and horror on it which she had seen there twice before.

"Why, Frank," she said, "you can't paint by this light!"

Something stirring at her elbow made her turn round quickly. Frank was sitting in a deep chair in the shadow, staring blankly before him.

She had mistaken the portrait for her husband.

For a moment neither of them spoke or moved. Then Frank got out of the chair where he was sitting and crossed the room to where the horrible fac-simile of himself stood against the wall, and putting himself unconsciously, Margery felt, into the same attitude, turned to her.

"I have worked quickly to-night," he said. "I have almost finished."

Margery looked suddenly back at the portrait, and noticed with a cold, growing horror that she had been the victim of some illusion. The light from the window cast no shadow at all on to it, and the shadow on the face was painted on the left side, not the right.

Frank paused, and Margery knew that her telegram would be useless.

The matter was between herself and Frank. If help could reach him it must come from her. In a moment she understood all. The vague fear, the disconnected hints, the thing he had wished to tell her once at New Quay, and once again that morning, the guilty face, her own shrinking, formed links of a connected chain. She had shrunk from what was evil, as Frank had shrunk from it and loathed it when she was there; but the fascination of which, interpreted by his artistic passion, he had been unable to resist. His own skill had raised the thing that he had thought was dead into new life, and now it asserted its old supremacy.

In a few moments he spoke again.

"Do you see how like we are?" he said, speaking slowly, as if he had some difficulty in finding words. "No wonder you mistook it for me. You can-

not see it properly in this light; in the daylight the likeness is even more extraordinary. Is it not clever of me to have painted such a picture? There is no picture like it in the world. It must go to the Academy next year, Margery, as a posthumous work. It is a creation. I have made a man!"

Frank paused, but Margery said nothing.

"There were some things about me you did not know before—things which were part of me, and had been vital to me," he went on. "Once or twice I wished to tell you of them, but you would not hear. Now you see them. I think you cannot help seeing them. You can see them in the portrait's face and in mine—clearest in mine; but tomorrow they will be quite as clear in the other. They say that hearing firing brings corpses to the surface. I

dare say it is true—at any rate, I have brought corpses to the surface. They are not pretty; corpses seldom are."

Margery came a step nearer to him, though her flesh cried out against it.

"Frank! Frank!" she said.

"Wait a moment," said he. "I wish to tell you more. A critic has no right, as I said, to criticise unless he knows more about the picture than the artist, but the artist may criticise his own picture. This is my picture—all mine. And it is me. It is all true. Do you remember last Sunday, Margy, when Greenock read about the judgment books being opened, and every man being judged by what was written in them? By-the-way, Mrs. Greenock writes sonnets. He said she was an accomplished sonneteer. Well, do you know what those books are? They are nothing else than the faces, the real

faces, of the men who are being judged. What chance do you think I shall have, for that is my book you see painted there—an illuminated manuscript. Why did you wish me to do it so much? Can you read it all? Can you see the Café Chantant in it? Can you see Paris, and the cruelty and the sweetness and bitterness of it? Can you see Claire in it, petite Claire, and the end, the whole of it, the pleasure, the weariness, the—the morgue? Yes, that was where I saw her last."

"No, Frank, no," said Margery; "don't tell me."

"It is not pleasant," said he. "It is not amusing to go to hell, as I have gone. This is not a nice book to read; I wish now I had never written it—'The Life and Adventures of Frank Trevor,' by himself."

The horror of great darkness had

come on Margery. She felt the physical result, which is stronger than all things in the world except love. She loved Frank and Frank loved her. There was still a chance.

Frank had picked up from the table the little yellow programme which he had painted and held it in his hands, turning it over and over.

"It won't break," he said, "it won't bend. My God! what am I to do? But—but I have written my judgment book; yet there are some chapters which I have not written. I cannot remember them. They were some chapters you and I wrote together about— But you will have forgotten—you gave me up. Margy, cannot you remember what they were? There was one chapter we wrote down in that little creek where we went to-day."

Frank stopped, and looked about the

room as if he were searching for something. In that pause love triumphed. Margery went to him quickly. The physical revolt was dead, for she loved him. She laid her hand on his shoulder.

"Frank," she said, "do you remember that you asked me whether I wished you to go on with that picture? I said I did, but I am here to tell you that I have changed my mind. I think you had better not go on with it. Tear it up, burn it. It is not good; it is devilish. And when you have done that we will go and find those chapters you spoke of, which we wrote together, you and I alone. Did you think they were lost? Could you not remember them? I remember them all. I have them quite safe. There are none of them lost."

For a moment a look of intense re-

lief came over Frank's face. Even in the darkness Margery could see that it had changed utterly. She glanced with sick horror at the portrait which only five minutes before she had thought was actually her husband. But almost immediately he shook his head.

"No, I must finish it now," he said. "I do not believe in death-bed repentance. There is very little more to do, for I have worked quickly to-day. Just one thing wants doing—a shadow is to be deepened in the mouth. Do you see what I mean? No, it is too dark for you to see it, though I can see it quite clearly. I wish I could explain to you what I mean, but you will never understand. Don't you see it is I who stand there on that easel? This thing which you think is me is nearly dead. It is like Pygmalion, isn't it, only the other way round? He made his statue come

to life, but I have put my life into that picture. If ever the story of Pygmalion is true, I could have done that; it is easier than what I have done."

"Yes, dear," said Margery, "I knew the picture would be a wonderful thing. But it is too dark to look at it now and too dark for you to paint. Let us come away, and we will find those chapters you spoke of. I have got them all, I tell you. They seem to me very good and very important—quite as important now, and much better, than the chapters you have written there."

She put her hand through Frank's arm,and all her soul went into that touch.

"Come," she said; "they are not here."

For one moment she felt Frank's arm tremble under the loving press of her fingers, but he said nothing and did not move.

"You asked me to kiss you this afternoon," she said; "and now, Frank, I ask you to kiss me. Kiss me on the lips, for we are husband and wife."

And standing by that painted horror he kissed her.

"And now come out for a few moments," said Margery, "for I cannot tell you here."

Frank obeyed, and together in silence they walked out on to the terrace.

"Let us sit down here," said she, "and I will tell you what you have forgotten."

"Those other chapters?" asked Frank. "I want them, for the picture is not complete."

"Yes, those other chapters. They are very short. Just this, Frank, that I loved you, and love you now. I see what your fear was: it was fear for me, not for yourself. You thought that if

you painted this picture you would have to put something into it which I did not know—something you were afraid of my hearing. I know it, and I am not afraid. But the chapters we wrote together are still true; they are the truest part of all. Your picture is not complete. It wants the most essential part of all."

Once more she felt a tremor go through his arm, but still he said nothing.

"You told me I did not understand what you meant," she said, "but I understand now. And you too did not understand me if you thought that anything in the world could make any difference to my love for you. We have all of us in our natures something not nice to look at, but what we stand or fall by is our beautiful chapters. You cannot destroy them, Frank, though you

thought you could, because they belong to me as well as you, and I will not have them destroyed. You thought you had lost them, but you have not. They are here. You may read them now with me."

Margery paused, and on the silence came the sudden, quick-drawn breath that opens the gates of tears. In a moment she felt Frank's arms round her, and his hands clasped about her neck.

"Margy! Margy!" he whispered, "have you got them now, even now? My God! how little I knew! You shrank from me, and I thought you had given me up; that there was nothing left to me but that—that horror. But what can I do? My judgment book is written. Is not that true too?"

"Do you remember what you said?" asked Margery. "Did you not tell me

that you loathed what you were painting? Why did you loathe it?"

"Why did I loathe it? Why, because it was — something horrible, wretched!"

"Let us go to the studio," said Margery.

"No, no!" cried he; "anywhere but there."

"Come, Frank," she said, "you must come with me."

In the passage hung a trophy made of knives and swords which Frank had once bought in the Soudan. Margery took down one of these, a thick steel dagger, short and two-edged. On the table below stood a lamp, and this she took in her other hand.

"Open the door," she said to Frank.

Then she gave the dagger into his hand, and with the lamp, she stood opposite the picture.

"Now!" she said.

He stood for a moment feeling the edge of the dagger, looking at Margery. Then with a sudden movement he grasped the side of the easel with one hand, and with the other plunged the dagger through the face.

"You devil, you devil!" he said.

He cut and stabbed the picture in fifty places. The torn shreds he ripped off and threw on the ground, trampling on them or picking them up to tear them again, and in a few moments all that there was left was a few shreds hanging from the frame.

Jack Armitage arrived next day. He never knew why Margery had sent for him, but she thanked him so genuinely for coming that he was not sorry he came.

THE END

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